

**'Evita'
Takes The
Gold...For
Now!**

**'Asteroid'
Rocks NBC!**

**Bowie
Looks
Back On
50!**

#364 • JANUARY 31, 1997

Entertainment

WEEKLY

Is 'Larry
Flynt'

Hustling Hollywood?

**THE TRUTH & THE LIES
BEHIND THE YEAR'S MOST
CONTROVERSIAL MOVIE**

Woody
Harrelson
stars as
the *Hustler*
magazine
publisher in
*The People vs.
Larry Flynt*

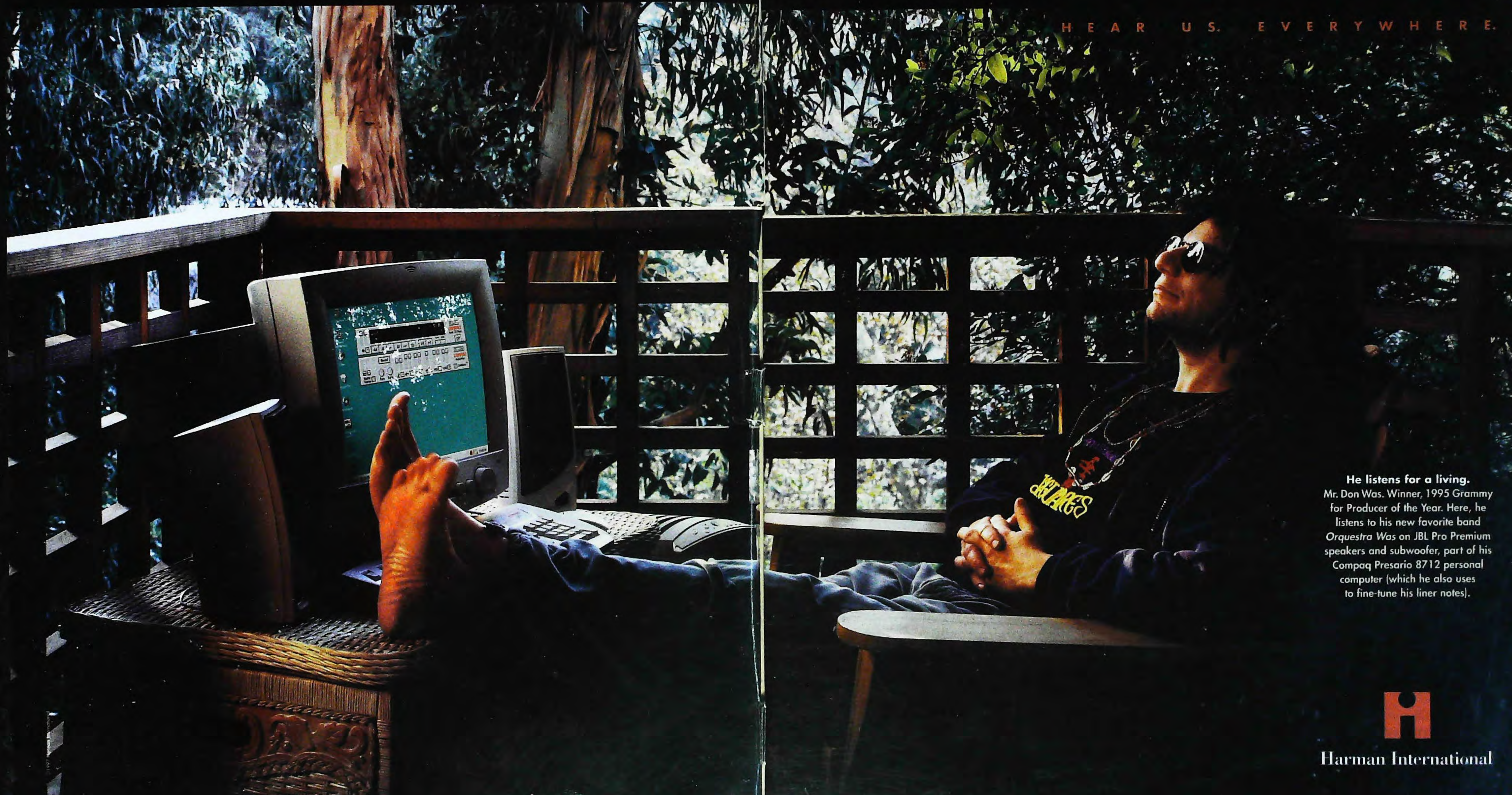
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Entertainment WEEKLY

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 1997

NEWS & NOTES

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♦ **Posts in the machine:** EW's bulletin boards on AOL and PATHFINDER are the liveliest places to discuss your favorite movies and TV shows.

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PET PROJECT: Political gadfly Woody Harrelson courts controversy with his portrayal of *Hustler* founder Larry Flynt

MAIL

FORCE MAJEURE

CHEERS TO the excellent cover of Luke Skywalker and the article on the new *Star Wars* trilogy (#361, Jan. 10). I own all three videos of the classic *Star Wars*, have seen all of the movies at the theater, and will not give up the chance to see them again in their rerelease. The *Star Wars* trilogy could not be seen enough (by my standards) to grow old—even 20 years later.

JEFFERY A. EWERS
Sandusky, Ohio

REGARDING the appeal of the 20-year-old *Star Wars* in rerelease on the big screen, I can only echo what I overheard after seeing the promo (while waiting for *Star Trek: First Contact* to begin): "I think I've just seen God."

D. HART ST. MARTIN
Claremont, Calif.

I WAS ONLY six years old in 1977 when *Star Wars* first came out. I saw it then, and I will see it again on the big screen. I, for one, cannot wait for Jan. 31.

JAMES GODFREY
Quincy, Mass.

DO YOU HONESTLY think that the rerelease of *Star Wars* is really one of the biggest gambles of 1997? I should think it'll make back the estimated \$30 million it took to revamp it in the first weekend! I think you guys have truly underestimated the fan base of these films. Most everyone I know owns the whole trilogy in one form or another, and all of those people will be among the first in line to get their tickets on the 31st! This is going to be like the rerelease of a classic Disney film—spend a little on advertising, make up some nice new prints, and sit back and watch the money roll in!

TOM RACINE
New York City

SPENDING AT LEAST \$30 million to rerelease spiffy new theatrical versions of the most revered science-fiction series



of all time is not a gamble. A gamble involves risk, like spending more than \$100 million on a *Titanic* movie, or \$55 million on a musical with Madonna.

RICHARD GOODMAN
Oakton, Va.

CHANGE *STAR WARS*? I've believed this to be ludicrous since I first heard of it. George Lucas is losing

touch with reality. Lucas has said that a special effect is just a tool to tell a story. Mr. Lucas, take it from someone who grew up on *Star Wars*; the story is all that matters. I just can't see how fans will accept this blasphemy. You should have concentrated your efforts where they belong: the prequels.

MATT SOLOVEY
Mountain Top, Pa.

WILL AUDIENCES come?" Come on! What were you thinking? You must have taken a light-saber blow to the head.

KARLE STEWART
Falls Church, Va.

I DON'T CARE how big your television is or how good a sound system you have; nothing compares to seeing a movie in the theater. Theaters are the reason people will be back in droves to see the *Star Wars* trilogy again.

PERRY BROWN
Denver

CORRECTIONS: Mad About You's theme song is sung by Andrew Gold; Paul Reiser and Don Was composed it (Music). Brad Pitt's character in Seven Years in Tibet, Heinrich Harrer, is Austrian ("The Biggest Gambles in Movies").

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NEWS & NOTES

JANUARY 31, 1997 • MOVIES, TV, BOOKS, MUSIC, MULTIMEDIA & VIDEO • EDITED BY MAGGIE MURPHY

THE WINNERS

BEST DRAMA
The English Patient

BEST MUSICAL OR COMEDY
Evita

BEST ACTOR, DRAMA
Geoffrey Rush (*Shine*)

BEST ACTRESS, DRAMA
Brenda Blethyn (*Secrets & Lies*)

BEST ACTOR, MUSICAL OR COMEDY
Tom Cruise (*Jerry Maguire*)

BEST ACTRESS, MUSICAL OR COMEDY
Madonna (*Evita*)

BEST DIRECTOR
Milos Forman (*The People vs. Larry Flynt*)

BEST TV DRAMA
The X-Files

BEST TV MUSICAL OR COMEDY
3rd Rock From the Sun

BEST ACTOR, TV DRAMA
David Duchovny (*The X-Files*)

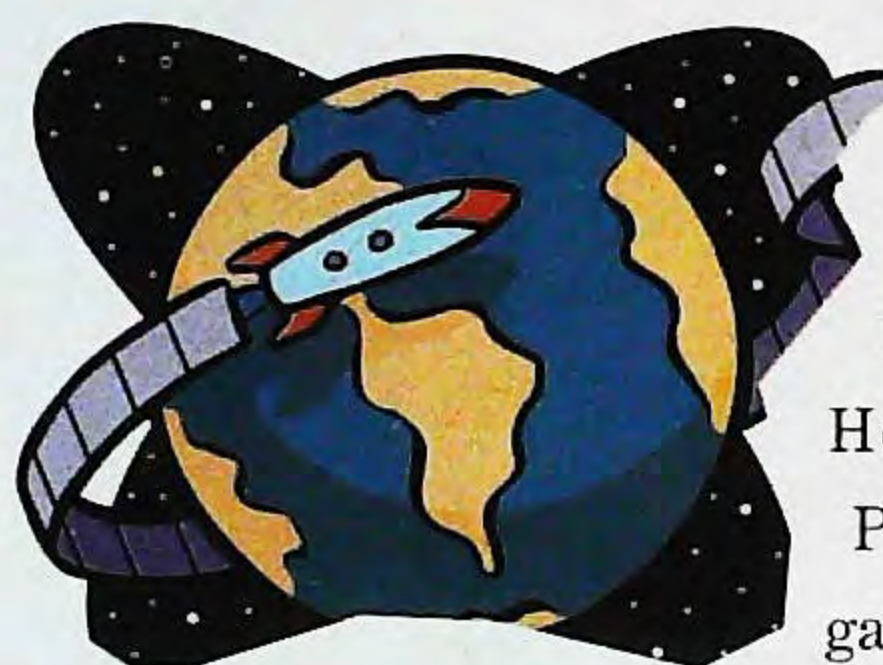
BEST ACTRESS, TV DRAMA
Gillian Anderson (*The X-Files*)

BEST ACTOR, MUSICAL OR COMEDY
John Lithgow (*3rd Rock From the Sun*)

BEST ACTRESS, MUSICAL OR COMEDY
Helen Hunt (*Mad About You*)

AROUND THE GLOBES

Just how seriously does Hollywood take the Golden Globe Awards? Ask us again on Oscar night.



MAYBE the Golden Globes are from Venus. At the Jan. 19 ceremony, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association gave its top awards to the alien-obsessed *X-Files* and *3rd Rock From the Sun*. And the movie awards were really otherworldly—after all, what can you say about a night when **Madonna** beats out **Frances McDormand** for best actress (in a comedy

or musical)? Traditionally, the Globes point the way toward the bigger planetary prize, the Oscars. But what are we to make of the spacey signals sent this year?

For one thing, with Madonna's surprising win and *Evita* picking up three awards, the Oscar spotlight has shifted—for now at least—off of *The People vs. Larry Flynt*'s **Courtney Love** (who lost out in the Best Actress in a Drama category) and onto the Material

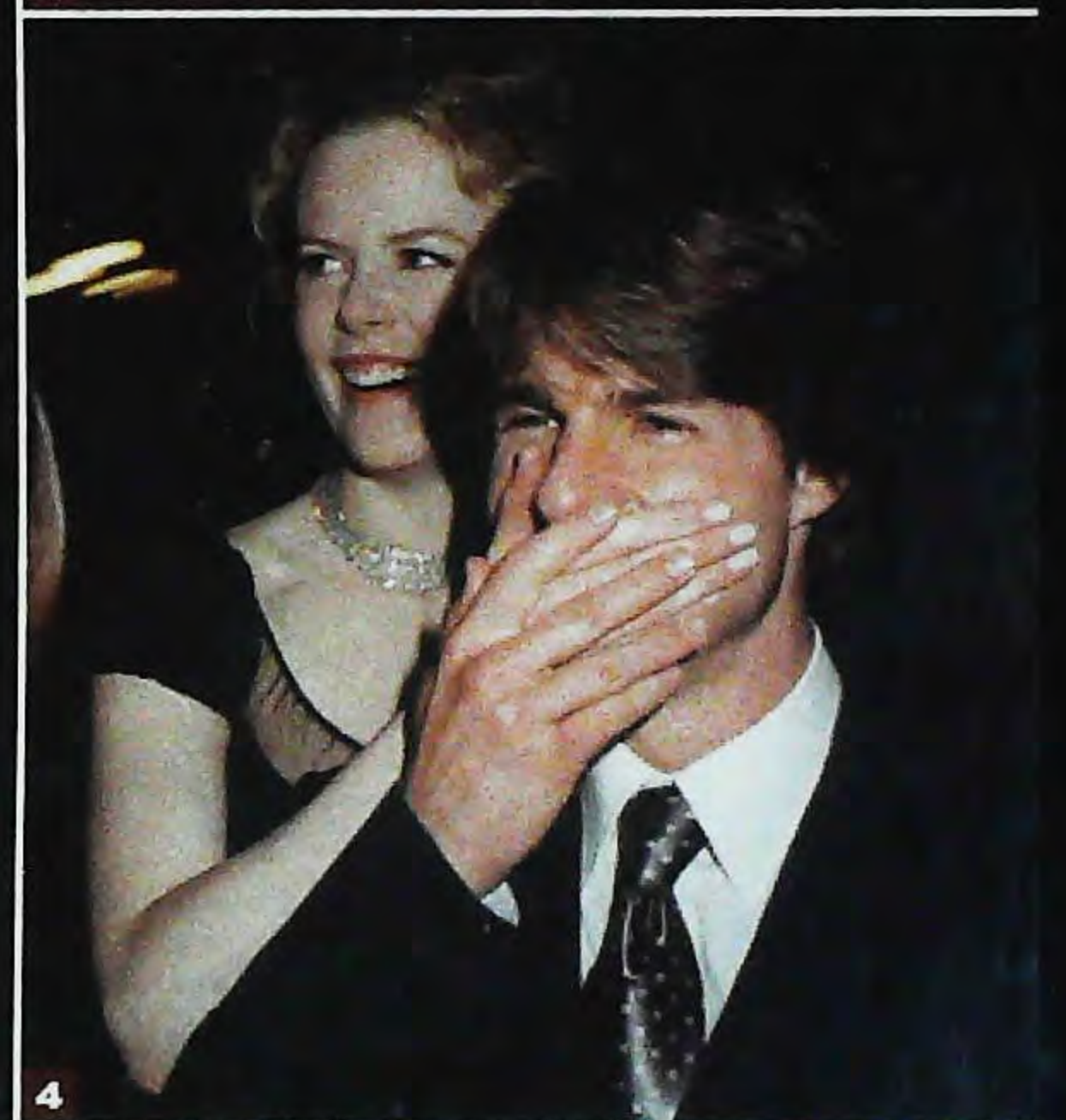
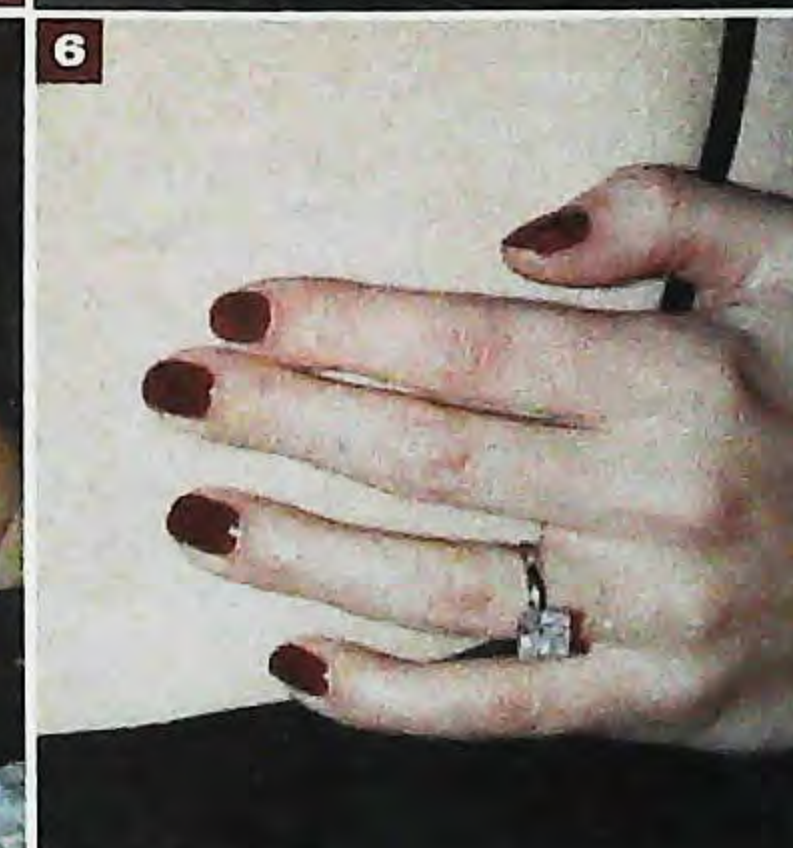
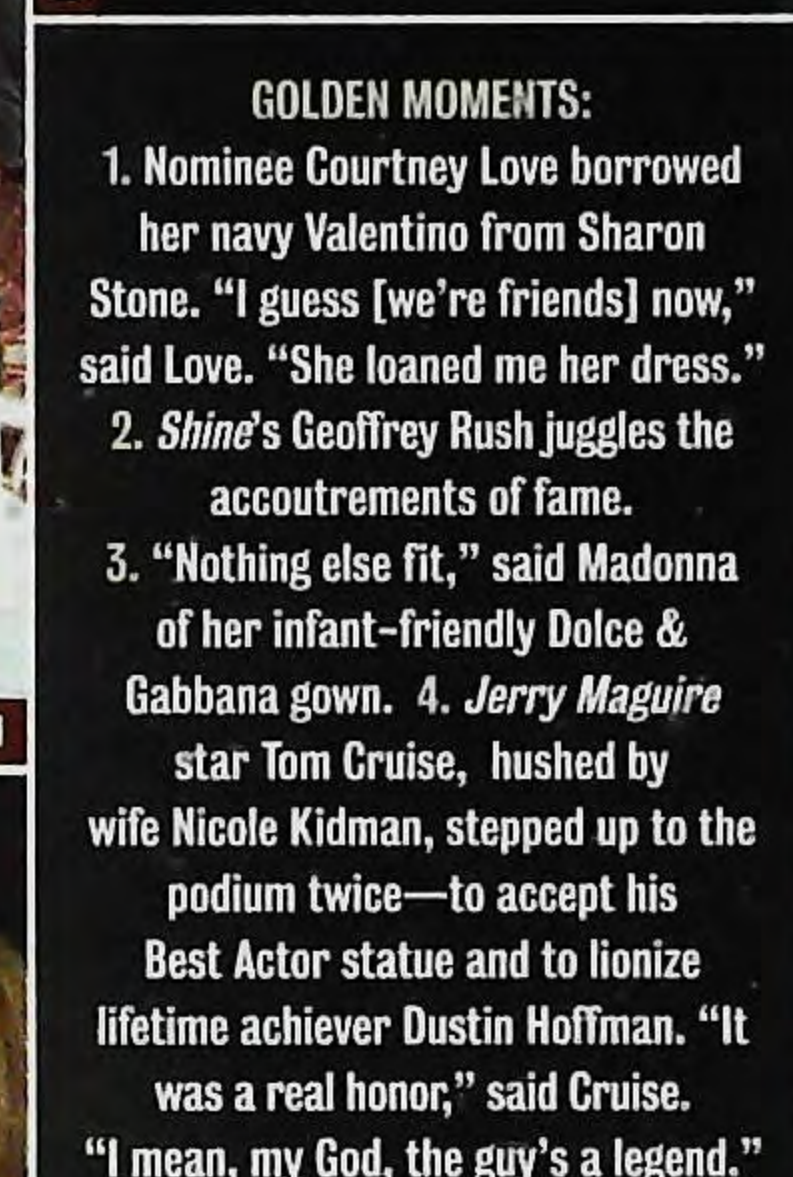
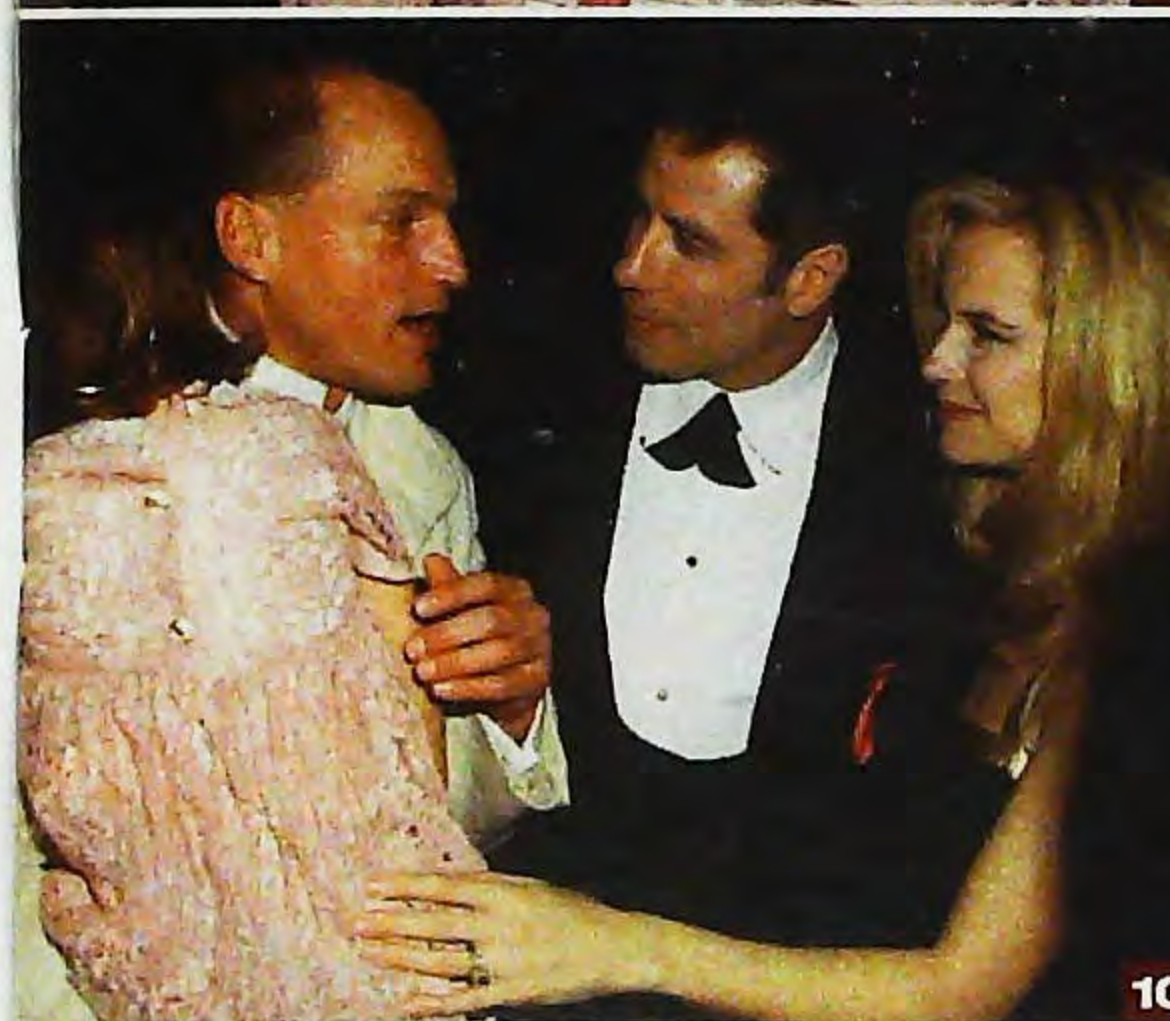
Girl. Terry Curtin, a spokeswoman for Buena Vista, *Evita*'s studio, believes the Globe victories “level the playing field.” But the studio behind *Flynt*, Sony's TriStar, isn't backing down, nor will it switch gears. Says Sony spokesman Ed Russell: “There will be no changes in the studio's campaign. We will continue to promote Love for Best Actress.”

The other clear message is that when it comes to the Best Picture race, nothing is clear.

BY DEGEN PENER

“It's very wide open this year,” admits *Evita* director **Alan Parker**. Although pre-Globe favorite *The English Patient* did win the Best Drama race, wins by *Secrets & Lies*' **Brenda Blethyn** and *Shine*'s **Geoffrey Rush** drew much-needed public attention to those art-house films. And although *Fargo* was shut out, a crowd-pleasing clip was one of the evening's highlights, and an informal poll of the celebs in attendance showed everyone from **Jane Seymour** to **James Woods** in support of the quirky comedy. (Remember: Journalists decide the Globes, while Hollywood votes for the Oscars.) “I was rooting for *Fargo*,” admits **Holly Hunter**.

The truth, of course, will be out Feb. 11, when the Academy narrows the field. And maybe the Oscars won't seem like they're from Mars. ♦ (Reporting by Pat H. Broeske, Heidi Siegmund Cuda, Tricia Laine, and David Poland)



GOLDEN MOMENTS:

1. Nominee Courtney Love borrowed her navy Valentino from Sharon Stone. “I guess [we're friends] now,” said Love. “She loaned me her dress.”
2. *Shine*'s Geoffrey Rush juggles the accoutrements of fame.
3. “Nothing else fit,” said Madonna of her infant-friendly Dolce & Gabbana gown.
4. *Jerry Maguire* star Tom Cruise, hushed by wife Nicole Kidman, stepped up to the podium twice—to accept his Best Actor statue and to lionize lifetime achiever Dustin Hoffman. “It was a real honor,” said Cruise. “I mean, my God, the guy's a legend.”
5. *The English Patient* stars Kristin Scott Thomas and Juliette Binoche flank director Anthony Minghella.
- 6 & 7. Gwyneth Paltrow confirmed that fiancé Brad Pitt, who didn't attend the ceremony, designed her engagement ring, “but I don't want to talk about it,” she said.
8. Even a sprained ankle (a basketball injury) couldn't keep the new caped crusader completely down. “I just sit in the Batmobile now,” said George Clooney.
9. Creepy duo Quentin Tarantino and *The X-Files*' Gillian Anderson.
10. Hemp-wearing *Larry Flynt* star Woody Harrelson (with his daughter, Deni) expressed speech freely with John Travolta and his wife, Kelly Preston.

Jim Mullen's Hot Sheet

What the country is talking about this week...

1 NEWT GINGRICH He's paying a \$300,000 fine to keep his \$171,600-a-year job, which cost him \$6 million to get. All to reform government spending.

2 MADONNA The Golden Globe winner may sell her New York apartment to John McEnroe. He's hoping some of her class will rub off on him.

3 STAR WARS A slightly revamped version is in theaters after 20 years. But will fans like Princess Leia with a "Rachel" haircut?

4 JOHN TAYLOR The Duran Duran guitarist reportedly announced he's quit the band. He couldn't take the hectic schedule.

5 WEIGHT WATCHERS Sarah Ferguson has agreed to be its spokesperson. As if it's hard to give up English food.

6 MOTHER Debbie Reynolds' first film in 25 years. There's simply not enough musical comedy anymore. Unless you count Metallica.

7 KENNETH BRANAGH How can you tell he's been trained in theater? Because you've got to break a few legs to make a good Hamlet.

8 J.D. SALINGER He's publishing his first new book in 34 years. It's called *Kathie Lee and Zooey*.

9 HELEN GURLEY BROWN The 74-year-old *Cosmo* girl is leaving the magazine. She's going to take over *Seventeen*.

10 BOB DOLE He'll star in a series of ads for the Visa card. Its new slogan: "Don't leave office without one."

11 THE WEATHER Stunning cold in North Dakota during winter? Flooding on the Russian River in California? Who could've predicted it?

12 LITTLE MISS BEAUTY PAGEANTS Remember, kids, it's what you are on the outside that counts.

13 SEINFELD George, Elaine, and Kramer all want a million dollars per episode. Do they know about shrinkage?

14 FIERCE CREATURES A gang of crazies tries to make a failing zoo profitable. Why pay \$7 for something you can see at work every day?

15 SPICE GIRLS The sexy Brit imports are due for their first U.S. tour. It's amazing how spandex can improve your singing.

TV's Bland Bill of Fare

ASIDE FROM THE hometown gumbo, there was very little spicy fare at this year's National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) convention in New Orleans. Instead, scores of hopeful producers were offering predictable action-adventure courses (*Conan the Adventurer*; *Soldier of Fortune, Inc.*), lots of warmed-over leftovers (*Police Academy—The Series*; *Name That Tune*) and way too much legal cuisine (*Comedy Court*; *Family Court*; and *People's Court*, starring former New York mayor Ed Koch). What else was at NATPE? Here's the dish:

◆ **O.J., Part Deux** Syndication will be the next battleground for two old nemeses. Johnnie Cochran joins the third season of *Court TV: Inside America's Courts* and will vie for viewers with Marcia Clark, who will host the female law-enforcement series *LadyLaw*. Says Cochran, "It's going to be a good battle, but we've done it once before."

◆ **The Lost World** The nostalgia inducer of the convention was New Line Television's *Lost in Space*. Production on a feature will begin shortly, and if all goes well, a new live-action series and an animated show will follow. For promotional kick, New Line roused 81-year-old Jonathan Harris (*Space's* Dr. Smith), who posed for a photo muttering "This girdle is killing me."

◆ **Hey, he did get an Emmy nomination.** The sole (pseudo) cast member to promote *Seinfeld* at the Columbia TriStar booth was Larry "Soup Nazi" Thomas. Thomas came dressed in character and dished out she-crab and bean soup. He acted, however, completely out of character: He actually smiled. —Casey Davidson



FOUND IN SPACE: Harris with an old pal from *Lost*

HEAD HUNTING

BURNING QUESTION In one of *Jerry Maguire's* funnier refrains, Jonathan Lipnicki, the film's scene-stealing tyke, informs Tom Cruise that "the human head weighs eight pounds." True?

ANo. Although there is some dispute about exactly how much an average noggin weighs, by all accounts the kid's number is too low. Craniosacral therapist Ken Frey, director of New York's Institute of Physical Therapy, says a typical head tips the scales at 14 to 15 pounds. Meanwhile, Scott Carrier, a spokesman for the Los Angeles coroner's office, maintains that the exact answer depends on where "you sever the head to weigh it. From the jawbone up, the average human head weighs approximately 11 pounds. It sounds gross, but if you like Freddy Krueger movies, then that's your bailiwick." —CD

Maybe the reason America's glued to the tube is the tube.

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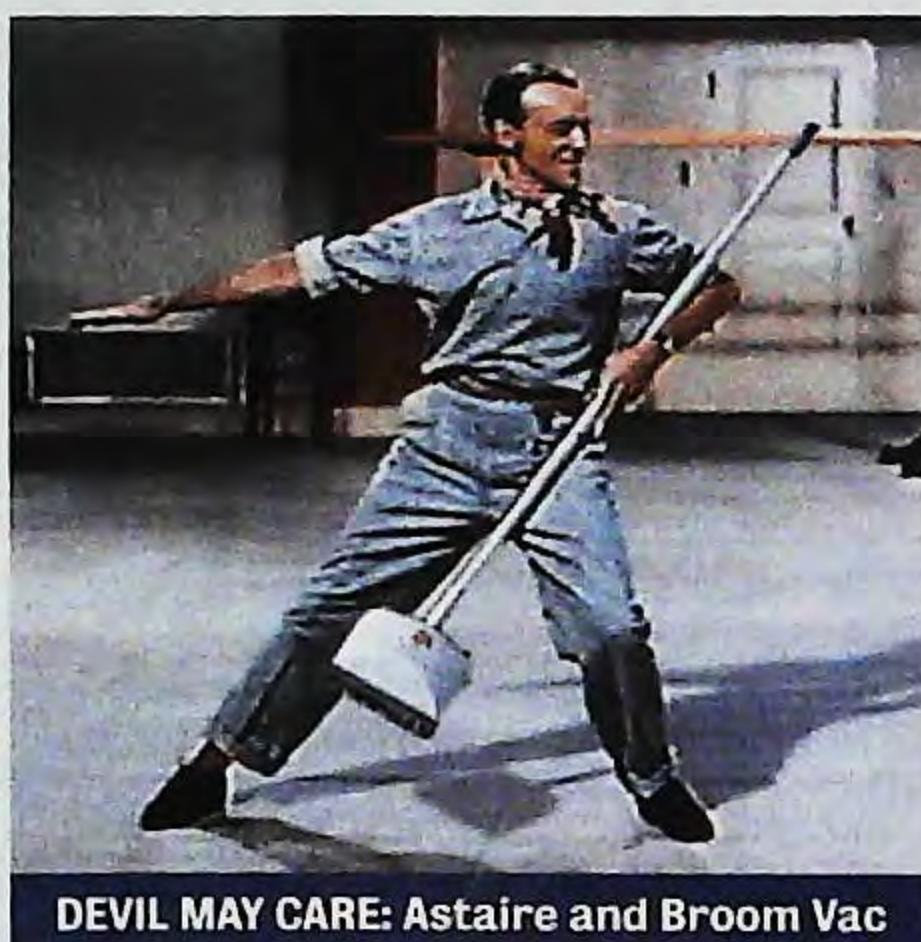
SONY



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FLASHES

CLEANING UP Clearly, someone made a deal with the Devil. In a series of new commercials for Dirt Devil vacuum cleaners, the ever-elegant **Fred Astaire**, who died in 1987, is shown hoofing with assorted cleaning machines, via a now-familiar digital process. (The same technology allowed **Jackie Gleason** to hawk Braun hand blenders in a recent ad.) In the first of three spots, which will debut during the Super Bowl Jan. 26, Astaire's famed *Royal Wedding* number was modified so that his hat-rack partner was replaced with a cordless Broom Vac. Understandably, movie purists are up in arms about the revisionist history. "I feel sorry that heirs of Mr. Astaire need the money that badly," notes film critic **Gene Siskel**. Astaire's widow, Robyn, 52, who licensed her late husband's image for an undisclosed amount of money, shrugs off the criticism. "There is nothing inherently inappropriate with advertising," says Robyn. "Fred did commercials when he was alive. And Fred should be out there." What's next: **Ginger Rogers** waltzing with a Cuisinart? —Casey Davidson and Anna Holmes



DEVIL MAY CARE: Astaire and Broom Vac

tarty teen (**Rose McGowan**) tells her best bud (**Neve Campbell**) that she's rented *Moves* so that they can see Cruise's privates. And it's true. According to *The Bare Facts Video Guide*, the then-21-year-old actor does display "very brief frontal nudity" in the 1983 movie. But do fans really want Cruise to show them the...you know? So far, no one's flocking to the video stores. "This sucker hasn't been taken out since we opened nearly two years ago," says Luisa "Lulu" Bacchiani, manager of Flik's Video in Manhattan, of *Moves*. *Scream* screenwriter Kevin Williamson chalks it up to the tidbit's being old news. "Kids today know all that stuff," he says. "I've known about the Cruise thing forever. We are the VCR generation." —Joe Dziemianowicz and Chris Nashawaty

HOLD ON R.E.M. rocked to "Star 69." Now Hollywood's picked up on call waiting. The dual-line telephone service malfunctions in *Jerry Maguire*, and it has a big role in **Albert Brooks'** *Mother*. (In the trailer, listen for Brooks' mantra: "It's still me.") "I don't know if I've ever heard of one of our products having a central part in the plot of a movie before," says Jeff Gluck, a New York telephone company spokesman who was unaware that the phone feature was being razzed on the big screen but considers the attention a "great awareness opportunity." Does it matter that both films point out glitches in the system? "The only time it doesn't switch over is when you don't push the switch hook down all the way," defends Gluck. "But people are afraid they're going to hang up on someone." Despite repeated phone calls, Brooks, who cowrote and directed the offending lines in *Mother*, could not be reached for comment. Perhaps he was on the other line. —Erin Richter

MOTHER OF INVENTION: Brooks

MARRIED...WITH DRESSES What was **Brooke Shields** doing wearing a wedding gown to the People's Choice Awards Jan. 12? Practicing. Though no official date has been set for the long-pending nuptials between Shields and tennis beau **Andre Agassi** (the couple have been engaged since February 1996), it appears Shields has been planning her big day. The *Suddenly Susan* star admitted that she found her People's Choice dress, a platinum Suzanne Neville design, while shopping at The Bridal Suite—a wedding boutique in Sherman Oaks, Calif. Suite owner Angelica Divinagracia also confirms that two other Neville wedding gowns—both appropriate for any season—have been considered by Shields. "She wanted a very, very romantic gown," says Divinagracia, "not necessarily traditional, but very feminine." Much to the delight of Divinagracia, Shields has been back twice to pin and pine. But so far, she hasn't made a final pick. —Tricia Laine

SEE WILLY While **Wes Craven's** latest gore-fest, *Scream*, is fast becoming a new terror benchmark (grossing \$50 million to date), it's also scaring up talk about **Tom Cruise's** *All the Right Moves*. In the slasher flick, a



AGASSI AND SHIELDS

Dazed and Employed

B LINK AND you'll miss it: Somewhere in the middle of *Dazed and Confused*, **Richard Linklater's** 1993 comedy about a pack of Texas teens growin' up and gettin' down in 1976, a young, apple-cheeked woman strolls silently past a tall, blond guy. "That's what I like about high school girls," the guy purrs creepily. It wasn't obvious at the time, but that was one of the pivotal star-making moments of the '90s: That groovy duo—**Matthew McConaughey** and **Reneé Zellweger**—would go on to shed their '70s stoner garb and score big hits with *A Time to Kill* and *Jerry Maguire*, respectively.



HITMAKERS: Confused alums McConaughey and Zellweger



Like 1973's *American Graffiti*, another high school nostalgia-fest in which a lonely guy (**Richard Dreyfuss**) gazes wistfully at a taciturn belle (**Suzanne Somers**), *Dazed* is starting to look like this generation's finishing school for stardom. True, the Gramercy Pictures film toked no more than \$8 million at the box office, but a surprising number of its then-anonymous ensemble cast have graduated to bold-name

fame. Just as *American Graffiti* was an unexpected launching pad for the likes of Dreyfuss, Somers, and **Harrison Ford**, *Dazed* featured McConaughey, Zellweger, indie-film darling **Parker Posey** (*Party Girl*), **Anthony Rapp** (a lead in the Broadway smash *Rent*), and YM mascot **Jason London** (*To Wong Foo...*). "Creatively, everyone knew something very special was going on," says Linklater. "But at the time, the people who distributed the movie felt burdened with a film that 'had no stars in it.'"

Surprisingly, *Dazed* shares a kinship with yet another star-stoking teen flick. Don Phillips, the casting director for *Dazed*, was also the man who helped corral **Sean Penn**, **Eric Stoltz**, **Anthony Edwards**, **Forest Whitaker**, **Jennifer Jason Leigh**, and **Phoebe Cates** for 1982's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. "Every once in a while," Phillips says, "there just happens to be a whole host of talented young actors, and if you can garner them in one vase, you're lucky." —Jeff Gordinier and Jake Tapper

MONITOR

WINNERS Looks like the late **Jerry Garcia's** second wife, Carolyn Adams Garcia, 49, may be able to keep truckin' in style. A Marin County judge ruled that a contract signed by the Grateful Dead guitarist in 1993, in which he promised to pay Adams Garcia \$5 million over 20 years, was legally binding. The ruling brings to an end a bitter battle between Adams Garcia and Deborah Koons Garcia, 47, Jerry's widow and third wife.

ARRESTED More *Diff'rent Strokes* for **Todd Bridges**, 31. The recovering cocaine addict and ex-child sitcom star was arrested Jan. 19 for assault with a deadly weapon. Bridges is accused of ramming his car into an acquaintance's vehicle after a fight in an L.A. arcade. Neither man was seriously injured. Bridges' manager and mother, Betty, says: "All we know was Todd was assaulted by this person while playing videogames."

BIRTHS A nine-pound boy, Dylan Thomas, to **Pierce Brosnan**, 43, and TV reporter **Keely Shaye Smith** (*Unsolved Mysteries*), 32, Jan. 13, in L.A. It's Smith's first child; Brosnan has three kids, two of them adopted, from his marriage to actress Cassandra Harris, who died of ovarian cancer in 1991.

DEATHS The legendary voice of Snow White, **Adriana Caselotti**, 80, of cancer, Jan. 19, in L.A. Caselotti was only 18 when she was chosen (from more than 150 contenders) to voice the

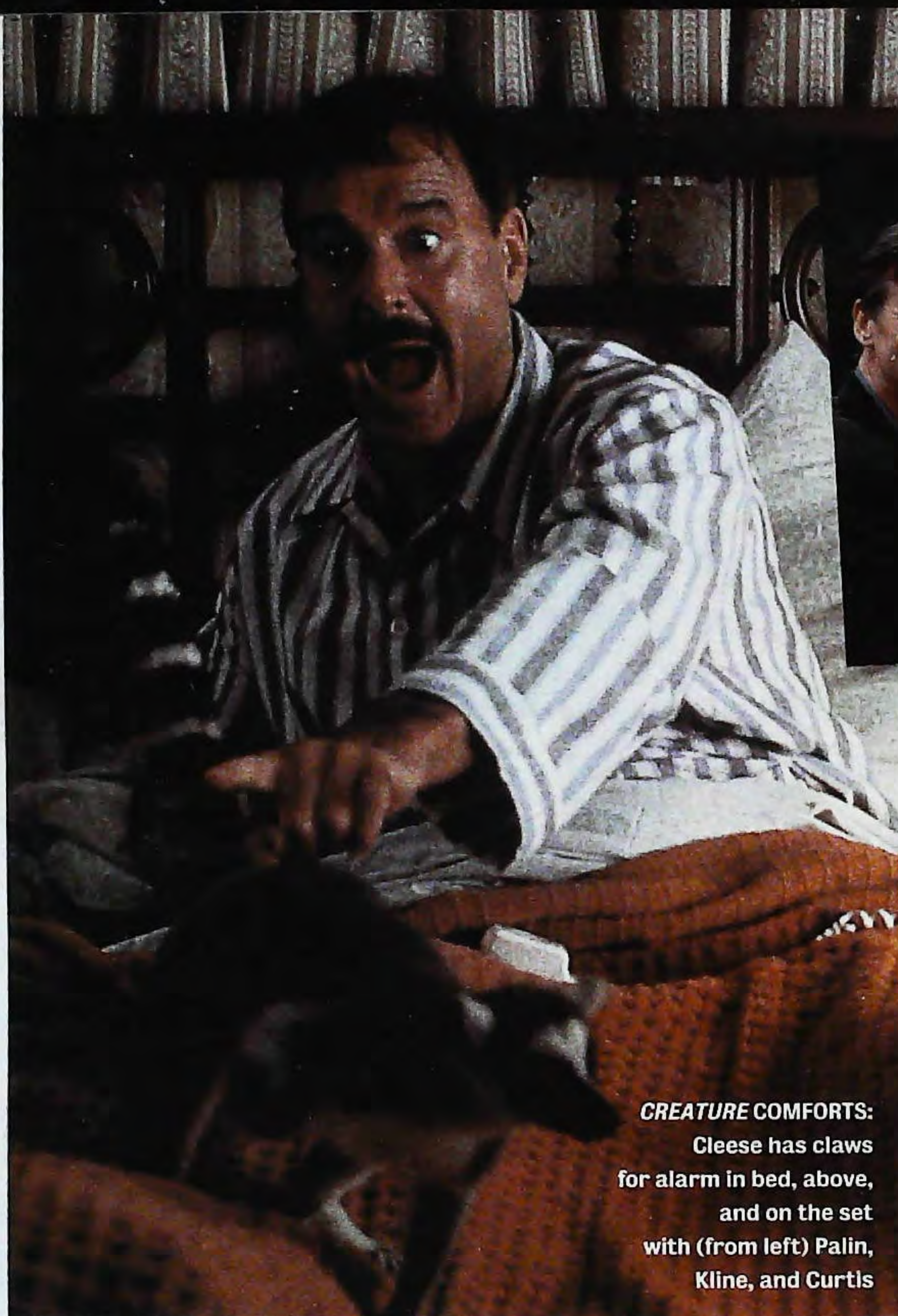
lead in Walt Disney's first animated feature, 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. "She knew that even after she died," says Marc Davis, an ex-Disney directing animator, "her voice would live forever in this great film."... Novelist-poet **James Dickey**, 73, of complications from emphysema, Jan. 19, in Columbia, S.C. Best known as author of 1970's *Deliverance* (on which the 1972 film was based), Dickey also wrote more than 20 books of poetry. His 1993 WWII novel, *To the White Sea*, will soon be made into a movie by Joel and Ethan Coen.... **Nirvana**, one of two white tigers used by trainers Siegfried and Roy in their act, was killed by her mate, Baroda, during a Jan. 17 show at Las Vegas' Mirage Hotel. A Mirage spokesperson, who called the incident "a tragic fluke," says Baroda clutched Nirvana's throat, causing the female to suffocate. Baroda is quarantined indefinitely. Siegfried and Roy decline to comment. —Shirley Fung, Anna Holmes, and Tom Sinclair



BRIDGES



SNOW WHITE



CREATURE COMFORTS:
Cleese has claws
for alarm in bed, above,
and on the set
with (from left) Palin,
Kline, and Curtis

*Recapturing the
'Fish Called Wanda' spirit
in 'Fierce Creatures' proved
an upstream journey for
John Cleese and company*

BY BRUCE FRETTS

Turd it is—until it's decided *heap* of s--- would be funnier. Later, Cleese remembers Kline has already used the S-word in his tirade, so the term changes to "heap of garbage."

Seems like a lot of work for a tortoise put-down, but it's business as usual for Cleese and company. It's taken eight years, two directors, fevered rewrites, and last-minute reshoots to get *Wanda's* crew back on screen, and still the drama isn't over. Says Cleese, "My greatest fear is we do all this work and people say, 'It's very funny but not as good as *Wanda*.'"

Wanda was, in fact, very good. After it snared three Oscar nominations and \$200 million worldwide at the box office, Cleese decided to try to re-create the magic but not with a straight sequel. "The feeling was, Been there, done that," he explains. So, in 1992, he sat down with Iain Johnstone, London *Sunday Times* film critic and first-time screenwriter, to devise a script that would reunite him with Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Michael Palin. But rather than continue *Fish's* story about a bumbling gang of thieves, Cleese started fresh, from an idea that Palin had developed with Terry Jones during their pre-*Monty Python* days. Cleese

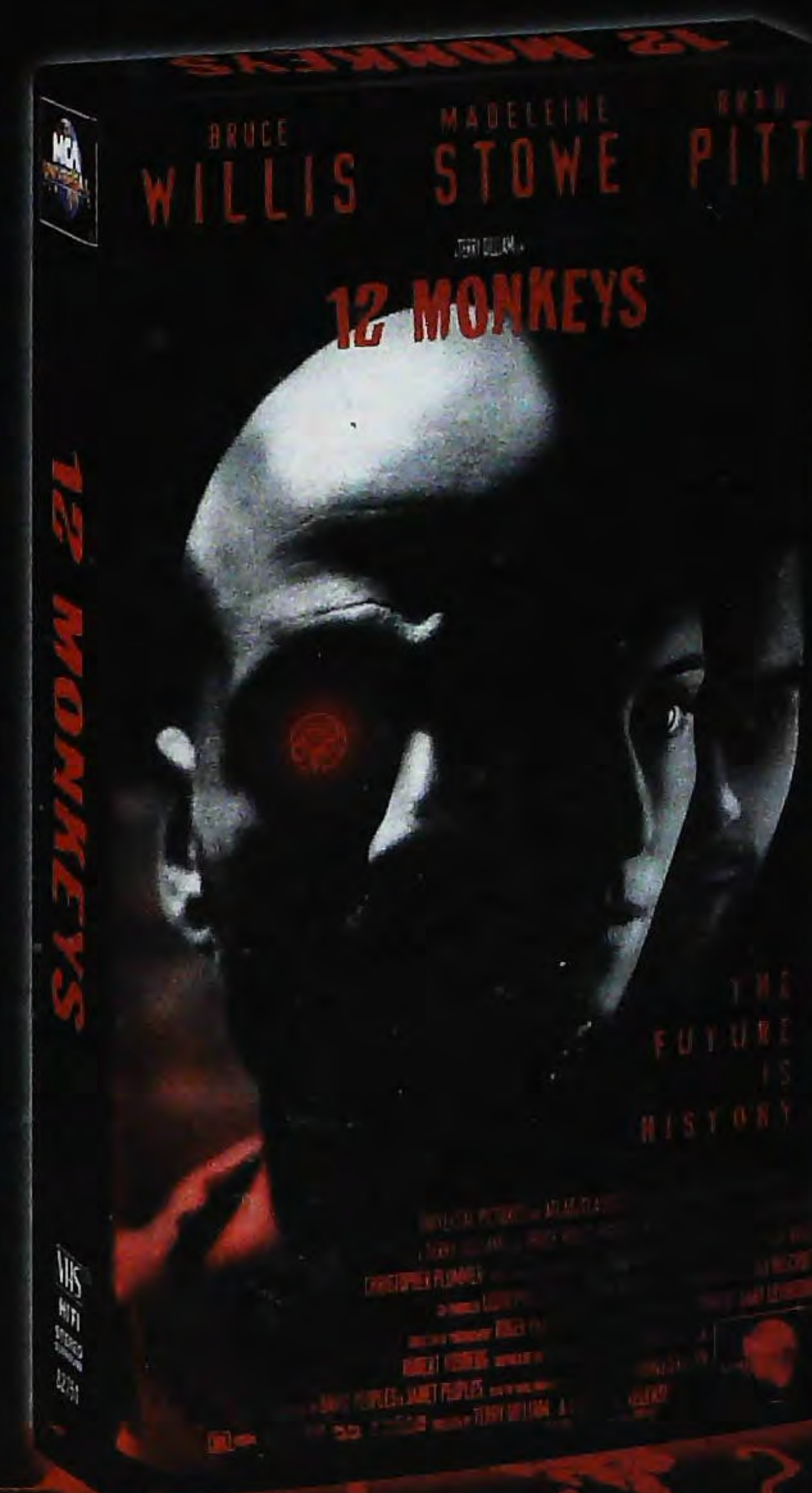
And Now for Something Completely Different



ON A MUGGY LONDON day in June 1995, John Cleese and Kevin Kline are struggling to bridge the language gap. They're rehearsing a scene from *Fierce Creatures*—the follow-up to their 1988 smash, *A Fish Called Wanda*—during which Kline's animal-hating character berates a giant tortoise. The question arises: What derogatory term should Kline use for the animal? ♦ "Does *tw--* have the same meaning in America?" Cleese inquires. ♦ "Yes, but it's not in usage much," Kline answers politely. ♦ "How about *turd*—is it in usage?" ♦ "Oh, yeah!"

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BEHIND THE SCENES

cast himself as a corporate executive who sets out to make a small English zoo more profitable by housing only the most dangerous of animals (hence the title). Curtis joined the team as his love interest, an American marketing maven ("I like to refer to her as a *corporate slut*," she says); Palin as the zoo's pesty insect expert; and Kline, who won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for *Fish*, as both the company's Rupert Murdochesque tycoon and his ne'er-do-well son. In place of *Fish*'s octogenarian director, Charles Crichton, Cleese enlisted Robert Young (*Splitting Heirs*).

Filming on *Fierce Creatures* was completed in August 1995—or so the cast thought. But when Universal started to screen the film for test audiences three months later, it became clear they were a long way from finished. The audience was particularly offended by a scene in which the elder Kline character flashed his manhood to impress a tiger. ("We thought it was hysterical," Cleese confesses, "but it was unbelievable how much the audience disliked it.") They also disapproved of the ending, in which both Kline characters were gored to death by rhinos.

"When [Universal president] Casey Silver said, 'I think you've got to go back to the point where you kill Kevin,' I had three reactions," Cleese recalls. "My God, that's 15 minutes from the end! 'My God, he's right!' and 'I made the same mistake as last time—I killed Kevin!'" (The ending of *Fish* was reshot twice to resurrect Kline's character, Otto.)

Reshoots were once again in order, but there was one problem: Four days after wrapping the film, Palin had left on an 10-month trip around the Pacific Rim to shoot a BBC/PBS documentary. Universal suggested shooting a new ending without Palin, but Cleese refused and the project was put on hold. During the downtime, screenwriters Cleese and Johnstone worked on a new ending with William Goldman, the veteran script doctor who owns a penthouse in the same Manhattan building as Cleese.

By the time Palin returned from his journey, director Young had started work on a new version of *Jane Eyre*. So Cleese enlisted Fred Schepisi (*Rox-*

NEWS & NOTES

anne), who was already set to direct him and Robin Williams in *Don Quixote*. "It's cruel to say it doesn't matter who directs it," admits Curtis, "but on some level, it doesn't." Adds Kline: "Whoever the directors were, they were an addition to a party that had started eight years before." (Young and Schepisi share screen credit.)

Last August, Schepisi and the cast did three weeks of reshoots in London, adding approximately \$7 million to the movie's \$18 million budget. In addition to the new ending—in which only one Kline character dies—Schepisi shot a new opener and replaced a more serious love scene between Cleese and Curtis with a double-entendre-laced encounter.

The additional material meant some

I expected a four-carat heart diamond from Tiffany's." She never got one, although Kline did give her a suitable wrap present. "It was a necklace with a pair of ceramic breasts with perky little nipples and a heart," Curtis reports, "because I satisfied those elements of the movie."

Cleese doesn't expect critics to take *Fierce* to their hearts, especially in England: "If Jesus Christ came back, the British press would say his sandals were old-fashioned and his hair wasn't clean. If they can't carp, they don't think they're doing good journalism." He did get one bit of good news from Europe, though: "The French distributor thinks it will take quite a lot more money than *Wanda* in France. But then, they *are* French—they love Jerry Lewis."



COSTUME FOOLERY: Kline assembles the suits (including Palin's beekeeper, center, and Cleese, third from left) in a scheme to corral more visitors to a small British zoo

original scenes ended up on the cutting-room floor. Among them: Palin and Robert Lindsay dressed in a tiger suit ("There isn't even a picture of it on my wall," Palin regrets) and Kline in a third role as his own mother ("I looked weird but strangely attractive," he says). Kline's flashing was also excised.

When the new version was submitted to test audiences last fall, the response was far more encouraging. The new *Fierce* posted test scores nearly identical to *Fish*'s, according to Cleese. "The main criticism of the movie is that it's not as mean-spirited as *Wanda*," he says.

Fierce's mellow tone owes much to the Curtis-Cleese romance. "They kept telling me I was the heart of the film, which basically means I'm not funny," says Curtis. "I dropped subtle hints that

Twenty months after filming began, Cleese, Palin, Curtis, and Kline have reconvened yet again—this time in New York City, to promote the movie at a press junket. Sitting down together for a lunch break, they discover some unfinished business. Should the movie be called a sequel to *Wanda* or not?

Curtis: "Ultimately, everybody's going to know it's a sequel."

Cleese: "But it's not a sequel. *Shhh!*"

Curtis: "Don't tell me to *shhh!*"

Cleese: "A sequel has the same characters."

Curtis: "It's got the same *spirit*."

Kline: "It's a semi-sequel."

Curtis: "I think way too much has been made about whether it's a sequel or an equal or a prequel. F--- it! It's a movie. Who cares?" ♦

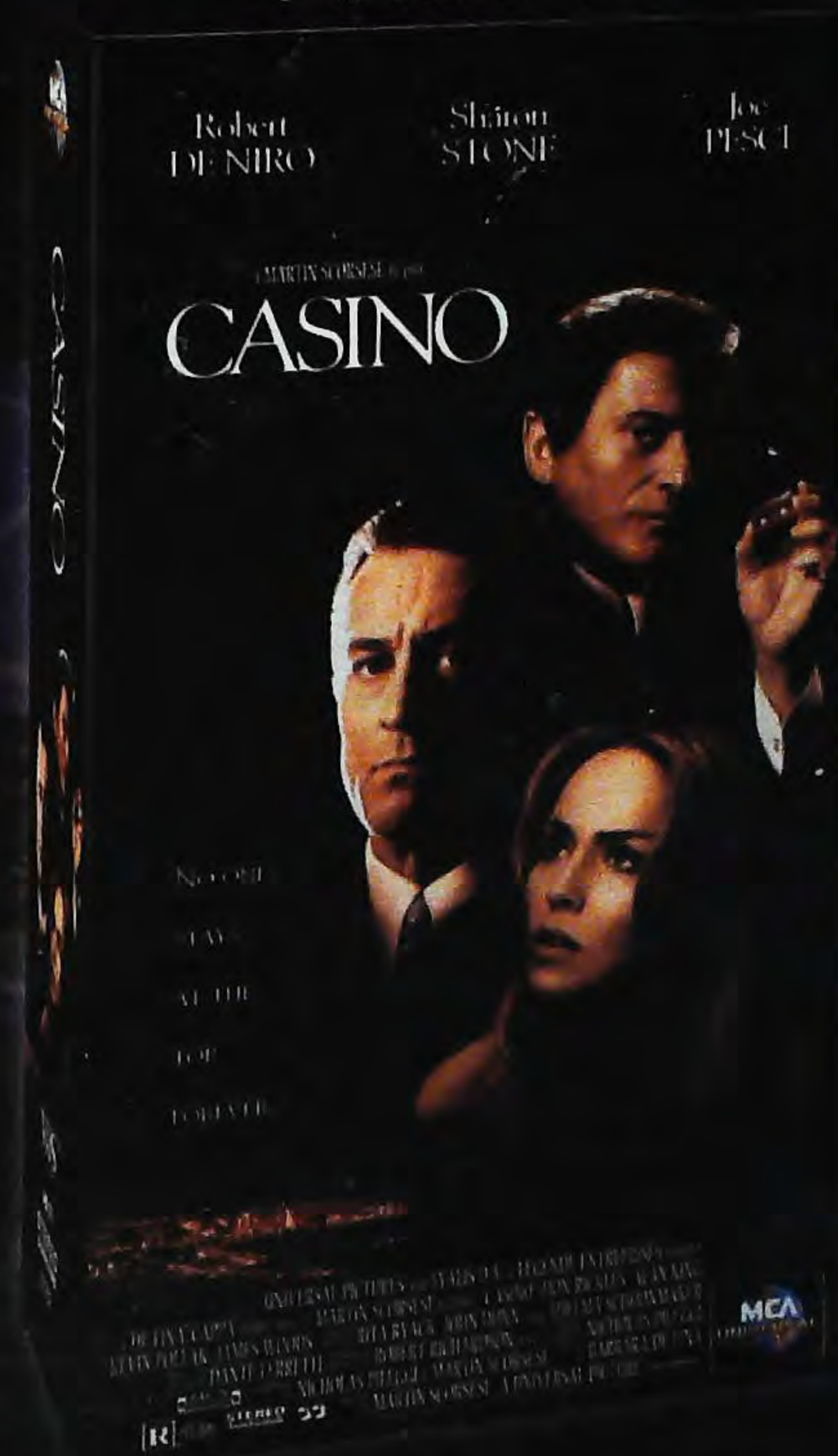
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ON THE PORNY 4TH OF JULY

BY BENJAMIN SVETKEY

MARY ELLEN MARK (2)



FIRST AMENDMENT ACTIVIST—
OR SADISTIC SMUT KING?
DRAMATIC LICENSE—OR
OUTRIGHT DISHONESTY? WITH
THE OSCARS APPROACHING,
**THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY
FLYNT** IGNITES A WAR OF
WORDS AS FEMINISTS ATTACK
THE FILMMAKERS AND THE
'HUSTLER' HONCHO.



BREAKING THE WAVES ABOVE: WOODY
HARRELSON DURING THE FILMING
OF FLYNT'S BAPTISM AS A BORN-AGAIN
CHRISTIAN. LEFT: FLYNT, DURING
PHYSICAL THERAPY IN 1979, FOLLOW-
ING THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.



SAINT OR SINNER? FLYNT, LOOKING AT SLIDES IN 1977 AT THE *HUSTLER* OFFICES, SAYS OF THE FILM (STARRING HARRELSON AND LOVE, ABOVE): "SOME PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS PERCEIVE ME AS A SCOUNDREL WITH NO TASTE. OTHERS ARE MY ARDENT FANS. FORMAN CALLS ME A DEVIL WITH WINGS—MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I AM."

GLORIA STEINEM IS AN ancient, worn-out old relic whose only claim to fame is urging some ugly women to march," drawls the man in the 14-karat-gold-plated wheelchair. "If you print anything I say today, print that." ♦ This helpful bit of advice is being offered on the patio of Larry Flynt's Hollywood Hills estate, a salmon pink rococo pile adorned with more garish animal statues than a pet cemetery. Inside, the sprawling living room looks exactly like the final scene of *Citizen*

Kane. A mountain of museum pieces—gilded mirrors, baroque birdcages, arabesque lamps—spills into every corner, many still dangling price tags (including a \$40,000 nude oil painting so tawdry it'd have Titian reaching for the walls to steady himself). "I don't know much about antiques," the infamous porn baron admits, "but I know what I want."

Of course, nobody ever accused the *Hustler* publisher of good taste—although these days anything is possible. As you've no doubt heard, Flynt, who for 23 years has lorded over one of the largest, most reviled porno empires in the world, is undergoing an extensive public image makeover, thanks to Milos Forman's film, *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. Starring Woody Harrelson as Flynt and Courtney Love as his drug-addicted wife Althea Leasure, who drowned in her

bathtub in 1987, the movie all but portrays Flynt as the Patrick Henry of porn, a First Amendment freedom fighter whose Supreme Court case helped make the world safe for democracy—not to mention crotch shots.

The reviews (including this magazine's) have been mostly glowing ("A civics lesson that will still be regaling film enthusiasts four decades hence," raved *USA Today*). Now the awards are starting to stack up: Last week Forman snagged a Golden Globe for Best Director, while *Flynt* writers Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski won Best Screenplay. There has been much Oscar chatter as well—even the suggestion that Love might be nominated for Best Actress (she's already won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress). Meanwhile, Flynt him-

self—that pioneer of gynecological photojournalism—has become a Hollywood cause célèbre, a radical-chic hero for the sexually dysfunctional '90s.

Except...here's the hitch. It turns out not everyone is wild about Larry. Anti-porn feminists are furious about what they see as the glamorization of a violent misogynist, and they've launched a potentially powerful campaign against the film. The first grenade was lobbed on Jan. 7 in *The New York Times*, with a scathing op-ed piece penned by—that's right—Gloria Steinem, who argued that the movie is nothing less than a colossal whitewash.

"Filmgoers don't see such *Hustler* features as...a woman being gang-raped on a pool table," the veteran feminist wrote. "Nor do you see such typical *Hustler* photo stories as a naked woman in handcuffs who is shaved, raped, and apparently killed by guards in a concentration camp-like setting.... You certainly don't see such illustrations as a charred expanse of what looks like human skin, with photos of dead and dismembered women pinned to it.... The truth is, if Flynt had published the same cruel images even of animals, this movie would never have been made."

Not surprisingly, the article made quite a splash, sparking a media controversy, with newspapers, *Charlie Rose*, and the *Today* show all picking up the story. Activists picketed the film in San Francisco. In fact, the anti-*Flynt* blitz has gathered so much steam, even some in the cast seem to be having second

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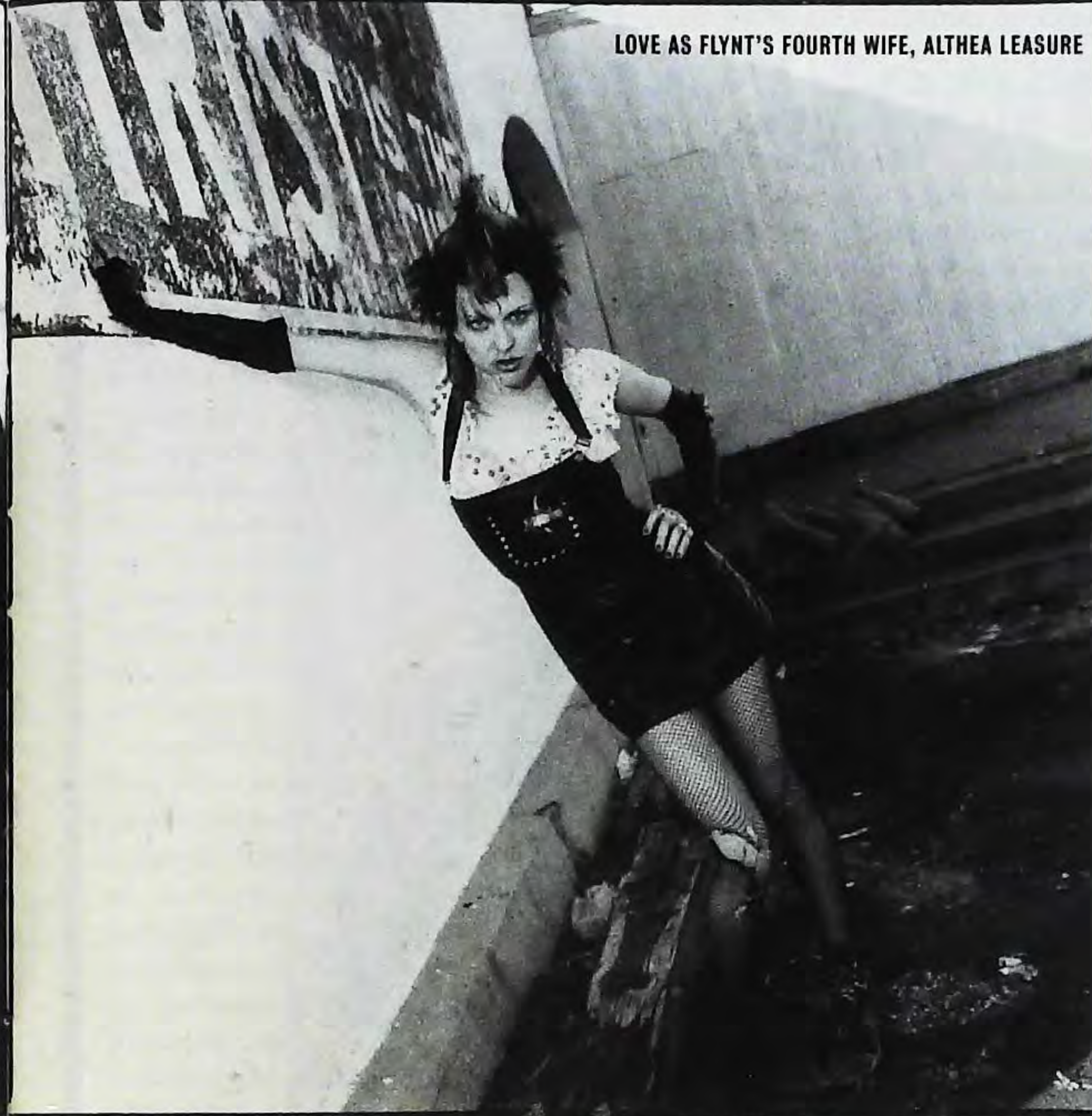
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FORMAN AND HARRELSON ON THE SET



LOVE AS FLYNT'S FOURTH WIFE, ALTHEA LEASURE

thoughts. "I'm a little torn, because I'm a feminist, so I would agree with Steinem on a lot of levels," Love tried to explain at the post-Golden Globes party, before her publicist dragged her away.

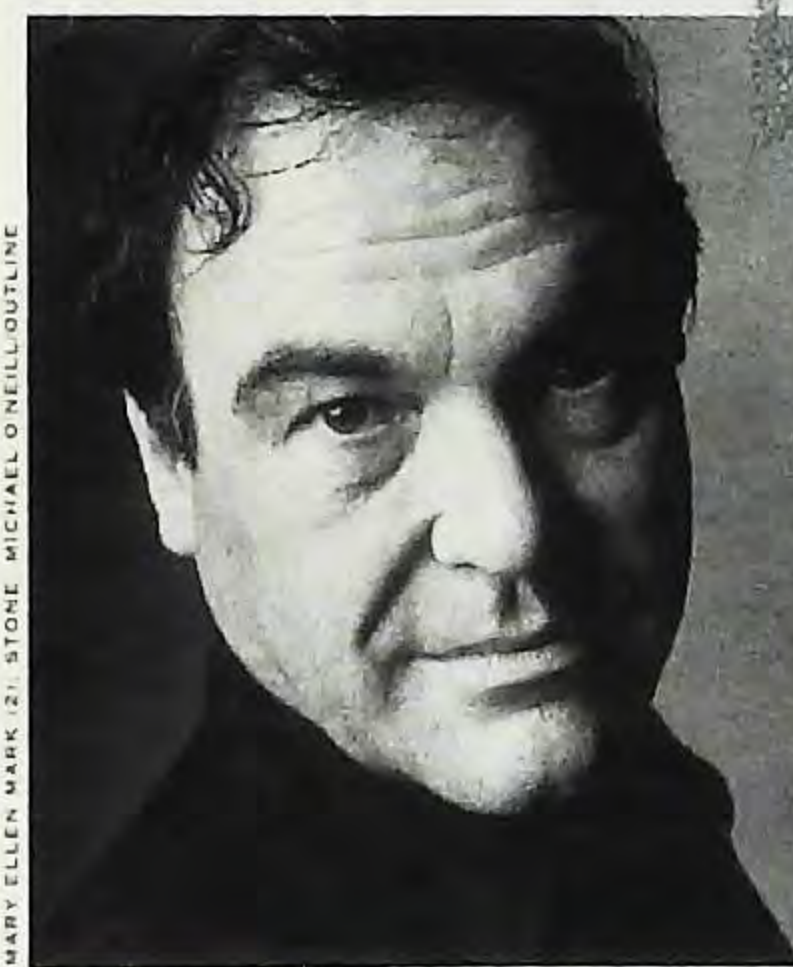
For Columbia Pictures, the film's distributor, the negative buzz could become a major pain in the box office. Although the film had a promising run when it opened last month in New York and L.A., its momentum has slowed since it expanded to 1,233 screens Jan. 10. So far, it's earned only \$13 million, about a quarter of what it cost to make, playing particularly poorly in the more conservative South. While Steinem can't take credit for slow ticket sales, there is a way the film's detractors could do serious damage: by turning Hollywood against *Flynt* and scuttling its Oscar chances. Last week, members of the Hollywood Women's Political Committee bought a full-page For Your Consideration ad in *Daily Variety*, reprinting Steinem's op-ed piece and essentially asking Academy voters not to nominate *Flynt*. (*Variety* ad sales director Mike Evans can't recall another anti-Oscar ad in the paper's history.)

A CONTROVERSIAL BIOPIC. Charges of historical revisionism. Enraged feminists. Can Oliver Stone be far behind? As it happens, the contentious filmmaker is a *Flynt* producer. "I briefly considered directing it," he says, "but people told me to back off that kind of material. I was sort of being pressured not to do scumbags anymore."

Oddly enough, despite the scumbag factor, *Flynt* was pretty easy to get greenlighted. Stone jumped in as producer in 1993, after reading a three-page treatment by writers Alexander and Karaszewski, who'd first hit on the idea while college roommates in the early '80s. Forman, who won Oscars for such iconic classic classics as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Amadeus*, signed on shortly thereafter. "My enthusiasm was immediate—the story just fascinated me," he says. Even the studio suits were suckers for the concept. "We thought it was going to be the worst pitch meeting of all time," recalls Karaszewski (he and his partner have some experience ped-

dling offbeat film bios—they also wrote 1994's *Ed Wood*). "But the studio people were laughing and jumping up and down. They said stuff like 'It's Capra with porn! Exactly what we want!' It turned out to be the best meeting we ever had."

Casting was a bit trickier. Bill Murray was first choice for Flynt. "But he wouldn't return our calls," says Stone. "He's a recluse or something." (Murray's agents had no comment.) Tom Arnold, Jim Carrey, and Tom Hanks were also considered before Stone hit on the idea of hiring his old *Natural Born Killers* buddy. "I couldn't understand why anyone would want to make a movie about Flynt," says Harrelson. "But then I started looking into it and realized I kinda liked the guy. He turns out to have more honesty and integrity than a lot of people I've met." For Althea, the studio pushed Ashley Judd, Mira Sorvino, or Patricia Arquette. But Stone was adamant about Love. "There was no question she was it," Stone says. "Absolutely none." (Flynt had his own idea about who should play his lost true love: "I was thinking Courteney Cox.")



MARY ELLEN MARK (2); STONE: MICHAEL O'NEILL/OUTLINE

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED DIRECTING IT, BUT PEOPLE TOLD ME TO BACK OFF THAT KIND OF MATERIAL.

—FLYNT PRODUCER OLIVER STONE

Meanwhile, the writers began months of painstaking research. "We got every issue of *Hustler* ever published," notes Alexander proudly. They interviewed Flynt's friends, his enemies, his associates—and ultimately Flynt himself, who had by then arranged a handsome consulting deal with Columbia. "Our first meeting with him, we didn't know what to expect," Karaszewski recalls. "He's got these big bodyguards and we expected

him to maybe kill us. But all he did was offer little fact-checking changes: 'On page 9 you have me serving molasses and biscuits in my bar. I served bologna.'"

After five drafts, the script that emerged concentrated on the years 1973 to 1988—charting Flynt's rise to the top of the porn world, his string of obscenity arrests, the assassination attempt that left him paralyzed from the waist down, and, finally, his Supreme Court victory

over Jerry Falwell, a historic decision that enshrined in legal doctrine every American's right to print whatever he pleases—so long as it's clear he's joking. (Falwell had sued *Hustler* over its Campari ad parody, which depicted the Moral Majority leader talking about "his first time" having incest with his mom.)

"It's really an amazing story," says Karaszewski. "If you just remove the pornography for a second, it's about a boy born in a log cabin who builds a hundred-million-dollar empire, gets shot standing up for what he believes, runs for President, and at the end of the day, gets vindicated by the Supreme Court. It's almost a Horatio Alger kind of thing."

But here's the rub: Karaszewski and Alexander really *did* remove the pornography—at least the truly hardcore stuff. *Hustler's* up-close-and-extremely-personal photo style, its heavy-duty bondage fantasies, its bestiality drawings—most of that is barely hinted at in the movie. And that's not all that got left out. The magazine's racist and anti-Semitic overtones—one *Hustler* cartoon showed a black man reaching for a watermelon on a giant mousetrap—is also nowhere to be found. Some other tidbits that are MIA in the movie: Flynt's three previous mar-

riages, from which he had five children, his manic depression, and his early sexual flirtations with a farmyard chicken. (Okay, so maybe some things actually *are* better left unmentioned.)

Still, it's not just Steinem and pals who are crying cover-up over *Flynt*. Once again, anti-porn feminists have found strange bedfellows among the anti-porn religious right. "There's no question that this movie is inaccurate,"

says Falwell, who refuses to see the film but doesn't mind criticizing it—not to mention going on *Larry King Live* with Flynt Jan. 10 for an all-smiles showbiz “debate.” “I hear it has a scene of me giving a press conference with Charles Keating at the Supreme Court. I don’t even know Keating. I met him once.”

Steinem claims no love for Falwell—“He is not our ally”—but she does make some similar points. “The film is a lie,” she says. “It portrays Flynt as against violence. But his stock-in-trade is violence.

when it’s supposed to be ridiculous.”

“I’m afraid nothing less than making Larry Flynt 100 percent evil would satisfy Ms. Steinem—and that’s not true about anyone,” says Forman. “You know, when you make a history lesson, you have to be faithful to the facts. But when you make a drama, all you have to do is be faithful to the spirit of the facts. And that I am convinced we did.”

Ditto the writers. “When you’re turning someone’s life into a two-hour

he’s got a lot of tenacity and courage.”

There’s the Larry his underlings know at Flynt Publications: “He’s unbelievably cheap,” says one. “The joke around the offices is that the sequel will be called *The Employees vs. Larry Flynt*.” And there’s the Larry that Althea’s sister Marsha Rider and her husband, Bill, an ex-security chief for Flynt, claim to know: They’ve been telling anyone who’ll listen that Flynt tried to order hits on Frank Sinatra, Hugh Hefner and Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione, among others. (Flynt denies all charges.)

For the record, the 54-year-old man wheeling around his Hollywood Hills estate on this mid-January day really doesn’t look much like the Flynt you see on screen—though Harrelson did nail his warbling, drunk-sounding speech impediment (lingering from his spinal injury). As in the movie, Flynt is full of blustering charm and raunchy playfulness, as well as an utter immunity to embarrassment (he talks about his youthful chicken fling with nary a blush). Does this make the film more accurate or less? Does it make Steinem or Stone closer to being right?

“The question is, am I a smut peddler or a First Amendment crusader?” Flynt sums up. “I’d say a little bit of both. Some people will always perceive me as a scoundrel with no taste, a dirty old man in the back room cranking out pornography. Others are my ardent fans. Milos Forman calls me a devil with wings—maybe that’s what I am. All I know is that the debate is never going to go away. Not in my lifetime, anyway.”

And certainly not by February, when Oscar nominations are announced. So far, the signals are mixed. While the Golden Globes went well, the Directors Guild snubbed *Flynt* last week by overlooking Forman in its nominations. But whatever the film’s fate when they open the envelopes in March, there is a deliciously rich irony here: The man who spent his entire life making money off naked women is now gambling all his integrity and legitimacy on a little naked man. ♦ (Additional reporting by Dave Karger and Tricia Laine)

Hollywood Cleans Up Hustler

By Gloria Steinem

Larry Flynt the Movie is even more cynical than Larry Flynt the Man. “The People vs. Larry Flynt” is a creation of Hiroshima, marching Nazis and the My Lai massacre. “Which is more obscene,” the Flynt character asks, “sex or war?” Viewers know Hustler’s real content ask, “Which is more obscene?”

His magazine is a creation of Hiroshima, marching Nazis and the My Lai massacre. “Which is more obscene,” the Flynt character asks, “sex or war?” Viewers know Hustler’s real content ask, “Which is more obscene?”

“This is not just a different interpretation of a historical figure, like Oliver Stone’s *Nixon*. This is like doing a film about Vietnam in which you say the worst thing about it was that it was tacky, but it really wasn’t all that dangerous, and it was actually quite a lot of fun. The movie has very little to do with the First Amendment. That’s just window dressing. Any asshole would support the First Amendment. The question is, Why would Hollywood glorify a sexual fascist when they wouldn’t glorify Nazis trying to march in Skokie or Klansmen advocating violence, who won far more important rulings for the First Amendment?”

Naturally, the men who made *Flynt* think differently. “I don’t know what Steinem is talking about,” says Stone. “Larry is not into violence against women. He puts them in a meat grinder as a joke. Doesn’t she have a sense of humor? She’s making exactly the same mistake Falwell made. She’s taking it seriously

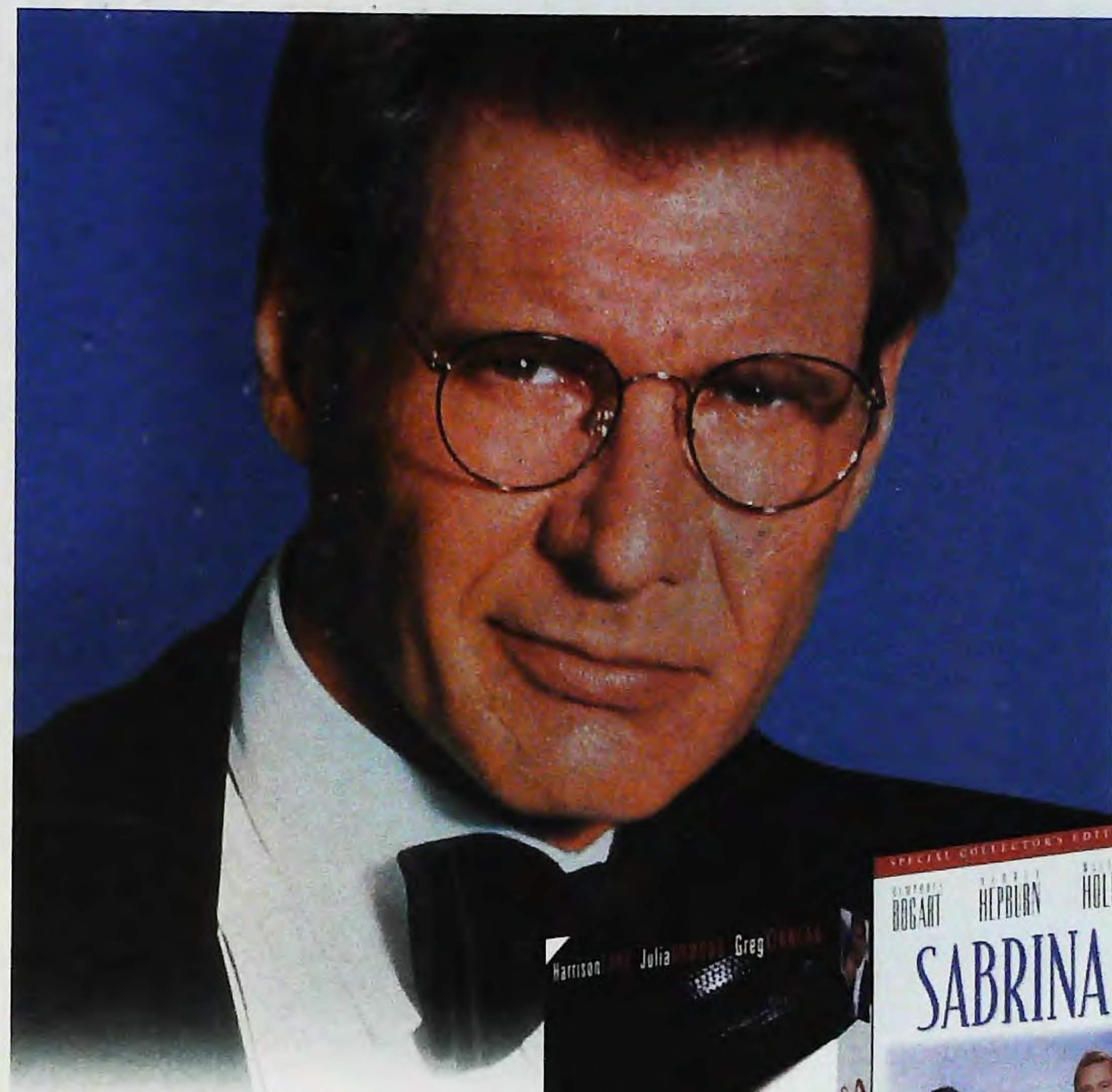
movie, you have to leave stuff out,” says Alexander. “You have to condense things. But the film is an honest portrait.” Nods Karaszewski: “If you meet Flynt, he’s charming. He’s got that twinkle in his eye. He’s not pure evil.” Even Harrelson, who says he’s a big Steinem fan, thinks she’s missing the point. “To me, this movie is a lot like Stone’s *Nixon*. That was about a truly immoral guy, but I came out feeling compassion for him. Same thing with Larry. He’s a real low-life, but there are scenes in which you just have to feel for him.”

IF THIS ARTICLE WERE a cartoon in an issue of *Hustler*, the punchline would probably be some sick, smart-ass joke along the lines of...*Will the real Larry Flynt please stand up?* But this magazine isn’t nearly so tasteless, so let’s put it this way: The problem with trying to figure out if the Flynt portrayed in *Flynt* is accurate is that nobody can agree on who the true Larry Flynt really is. For instance, there’s Al Goldstein’s Larry: “He’s a thug, but he’s a lovable thug,” says the *Screw* magazine publisher, a friend for 26 years. “He’s very damaged and parts of him are not very nice, but



MS. MANNERS: FEMINIST STEINEM, WHO LAMBASTED THE FILM IN THE JAN. 7 NEW YORK TIMES, CALLS FLYNT “TOTALLY DISHONEST—THE WATERGATE OF MOVIES”

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GOLDEN YEARS

GRAYING YET GLEAMING, BOWIE RETURNS TO STUDIO, STAGE, AND SCREEN (IN HIS "LITTLE WONDER" VIDEO, FAR RIGHT)

JONATHAN HAUSER/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA



STAR DUST MEMORIES

ON THE VERGE OF YET ANOTHER INCARNATION, A 50-YEAR-OLD DAVID BOWIE LOOKS BACK ON HIS GLITTERY, GLAM PAST

DAVE GROHL is backstage at New York's Madison Square Garden when an envoy hands him a cream-colored envelope. As he slides it open, Grohl—the frontman of the Foo Fighters and Nirvana's former drummer—suddenly realizes that David Bowie and his Somalian supermodel wife, Iman, have invited

BY JEFF GORDINIER

him to a private soiree. He presses the invite to his lips and gives it a smooch. He leaps up and down. He breaks into song: "I've got the golden ticket! I've got the golden ticket!"

"Iman requests the pleasure of your company..." Grohl reads aloud. "How *hot* is that? This is not supposed to happen to dumb people like me."

Actually, it wasn't supposed to happen to Bowie, either. On this slushy night of Jan. 9, aristocrats of the alternative nation—Grohl, Sonic Youth, Billy Corgan of the Smashing Pumpkins, Robert Smith of the Cure—have gathered at the Garden to pay homage to the Thin White Duke as part of a gargantuan benefit concert to celebrate his 50th birthday. Originally, Bowie says, the show's producers wanted to fluff up his half-century bash with safe choices—mainstream Bowie cronies like Tina Turner, Luther Vandross, and Mick Jagger who would entice pay-per-viewers when a filmed version of the concert airs on HBO March 8. But the artist formerly known as Aladdin Sane opted for all the young dudes. "I didn't want to do that sort of tribute-y retrospective thing," Bowie says. "I made a wish list of the guests that *I* would be happy working with, so that the event felt as though I'm still doing stuff *now*. I'm not a nostalgic person."

Indeed, Bowie refuses to go gently into his golden years. Repudiating the slick, floppy-haired soul of his most commercially flush period—the *Let's Dance* phase of the big '80s—Bowie's upcoming *Earthling* album, due in stores Feb. 11, bubbles with the dense, spiky, hyperkinetic dance sound that's taken Europe by storm: electronic music variously known as jungle or drum-and-bass. Last year Madonna inducted Bowie into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; he neglected to show up.



He shuns his old hits in concert. "My understanding of success over the last 10 years has gotten back to what it used to be when I was working in the '70s," Bowie says. "The thing I always wanted more than anything else was *creative* success."

True, that contrarian attitude hasn't given Bowie a hit in over a decade, but it has put him back in the "cool" column. Just as the ornery, ever-wandering Neil Young was embraced as the Godfather of Grunge six years ago, Bowie—the Master of Morph who declared his bisexuality in 1972, changed stage personas faster than most rock stars change chords, and slyly impersonated Andy Warhol in last year's film *Basquiat*—is suddenly seen as the brave emblem of an endlessly shifting pop climate. "He set the prototype for so many things," says Corgan. "It's the chameleon aspect," says Grohl. "He can do anything well. He can look like a bum, he can look like a supermodel."

Bowie may cringe at nostalgia, but lately everyone seems to recall that first outrageous glimpse of a glammed-out Ziggy Stardust in the '70s. "He was emaciated, he had bright orange hair and silver lipstick and no eyebrows," says the Cure's Smith. "And he looked fantastic. The potency of the image was so strong that the next day at school everyone was saying 'Did you see Bowie on *Top of the Pops*?!'"

These days Bowie's hair is back to bright orange. He's still emaciated—thanks, he says, to Iman's health-conscious cooking. Five days after the birthday wingding, outfitted in black jeans and a royal blue sweater, the ac-

tor and singer comes across not a whit like the imperious lizard who peers from stage and screen. Instead, he's brash and boyish, bouncing on his chair in a Manhattan recording studio near his New York City home, sucking ruthlessly on a Marlboro Light, and frequently breaking into bursts of maniacal laughter.

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY: You say you're not nostalgic, but how did you feel on stage, at 50, closing the birthday bash with 1969's "Space Oddity"?

DAVID BOWIE: Quite emotional, I must say. It's more than the song itself; it's the fact that it's the first hit that I ever had. It really seemed like the fulfillment of some kind of cycle to end up the concert with the first song that I ever really was known for. Some people in the audience seemed choked up.

It was all a bit guppy, wasn't it? See, I don't mind *one* moment like that. I just didn't want the whole show to degenerate into that kind of "Oh, do you remember what we were doing this night?" I *hate* going to shows like that, because I feel manipulated. I actually got away with playing eight completely new songs at this show! I thought that was quite a coup.

But people really go bonkers for the oldies. Does that bother you? Not at all. I understand how audiences react. It's just that I'm perverse about the way that I perform live. My reason for performing is not to please an audience. It's to present what I believe are exciting new ideas. I definitely won't bore an audience. If you want to go with what I'm doing, you *will* be entertained. But on the other hand, I'm not there to be just kind of a

walking jukebox for you. **These days you, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed—the three enfants terribles of the '70s—are considered almost elder statesmen in American rock.**

Yeah, I know. It's terribly flattering. I guess it kind of makes you think [*segues into nerdy American voice*], "Gee, I made a difference!"

But you must've known that already.

Not really. Not with America. I'm very aware of the impact I've had in Europe. But my impression of the reception I'd had in America was "Oh, here comes this eccentric limey again." I never felt that I'd contributed much to the fabric of American rock.

Earthling has a song called "I'm Afraid of Americans." Why are Americans afraid of dance music? Isn't that peculiar? I mean, this is the country of dance. **Does it frustrate you, since you're now exploring dance music?**

It does, because I don't really see much of a future for drum-and-bass in the States, frankly. I don't think it'll catch on in a major way over here.... I had America-mania when I was a kid, but I loved all the things that America rejects: It was black music, it was the beatnik poets, it was all the stuff that I thought was the true rebellious subversive side. To almost disown that and to give us back McDonald's and Disney is not fair, and it's not a true representation of what makes America great. What makes America great is its pioneer, independent spirit, not its corporate togetherness.

I've been asking people for their favorite David Bowie incarnations; *Hunky Dory* [1971] and *Ziggy Stardust* [1972] are the clear winners. Your favorites? *Station to Station* [1976] and

Low [1977]. Some of my best work was in those two albums. I understand *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy*; they are indeed a lot more hummable.

Do you have a Bowie incarnation that you loathe?

I have a couple of albums that I'm absolutely quite embarrassed about.

Embarrassed?

Yeah—because it was my fault. *Tonight* [1984] and *Never Let Me Down* [1987]. Those two albums for me were my nadir; they were just awful. I shouldn't have gone into the studio and made albums when I felt as I did. I'd totally fallen out of love with writing music at that time.

When Madonna inducted you into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, you didn't show up.

I'm not really one for those awards shows—that aspect of competitiveness leaves me a little cold—although I saw what Madonna said because somebody sent me the tape, and I thought it was incredibly generous of her, frankly. She really went up in my estimation because of that.

Like Madonna, you're credited with creating this ambisexual image in rock & roll.

It would've happened without me. I was just there at that point in musical history when those experimentations were going down, and I couldn't keep my mouth closed!

But you were so candid about your sexual preferences.

Yeah, absolutely. I was really intent, from the beginning, not to be one of these guys who lives in fear. I wasn't going to have that happen to me at all; I'd seen it hurt too many people around me. I led a particularly adventurous early life, and I just didn't want it catching up with me in the wrong way. So what-

ever I was going through, I used to tell people about it. **Because the public knows about that unfettered past, don't you encounter people who are surprised that you've settled into happy monogamy with Iman?**

I guess I've been heterosexual for so many years that most of the people I know now have only known me since, like, the early '80s or something. They've known me just as "the straight guy" who had this kind of dodgy past. So I don't think it's any surprise to them. I guess fans wonder what kind of mutated life I must've gone through to end up where I am, but I'm just your average joe! [*Laughs*] I love saying that!

What acting projects do you have lined up at the moment?

I'm not a keen actor. It's very low on my list of priorities. I'm not enamored of the process; I find it incredibly vegetating. I have all the same ambitions as every other actor when I get onto a set, which is, I take a novel with me and intend to read it, and I never do! I just end up sitting outside the trailer, talking with people about God knows what. And I look up at the end of the day and I say, "What a waste of a f---ing day—just to be standing there for 15 minutes in front of the camera! I could've been doing this, this, and this!" I mean, I quite like the idea of being a film star, but I'm not sure if I'm prepared to do all the work that's necessary to be one. With *Basquiat*, I was at home in New York, so when they finished with me, I could just wander off and go to a record shop. I did go shopping as Andy a couple of times, just for the hell of it.

What happened?

It was heart stopping! I

shopped in his neighborhood, down in SoHo, so the reactions were so bizarre. People were nearly dropping on the street—especially older people who had seen Andy around the neighborhood a lot. I would walk around the

corner and they'd go [*gasps*], "Oh, my God!" I loved it. I had a couple of days of just feeling like a practical joker. **Considering your lifelong obsession with extraterrestrial life, do you watch *The X-Files*?**

I don't watch *The X-Files*, no. I'm pleased to say I've got too many things to do. I don't watch much television, because of that. I do believe in extraterrestrials, but it's not a significant part of my life.

Do you believe in alien abductions? [*Slipping into a Cockney brogue*] Well, I've abducted a few people in my time! With their consent, of course. ♦

BIRTHDAY BOWIE

(Clockwise from top left) At the Garden party, Grohl and Smith strum; Corgan sings along; and at the end, it's a blowout



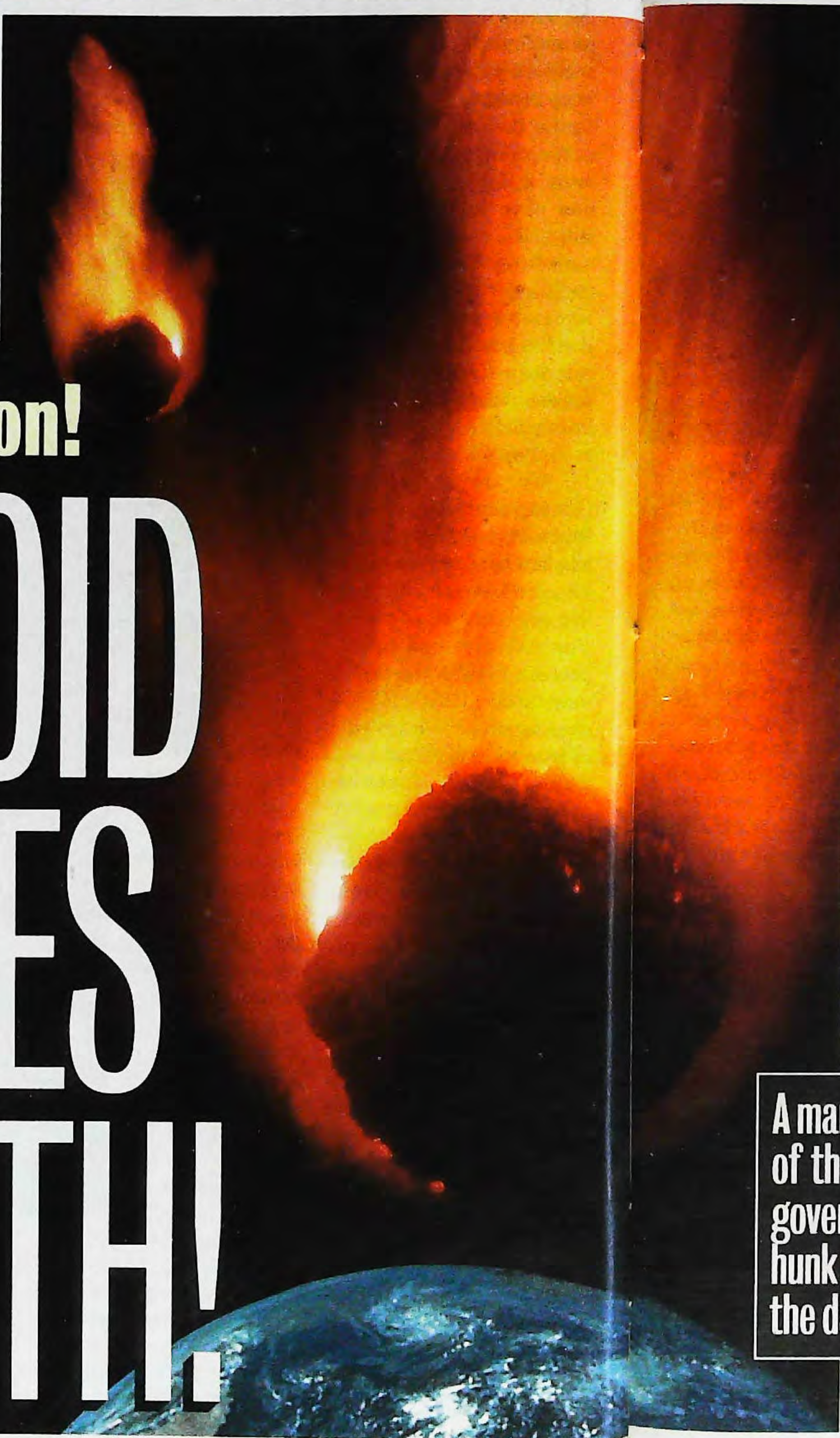
NBC UNLEASHES A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR SWEEPS EVENT AIMED AT DECIMATING THE COMPETITION—NO NETWORK IS SAFE!

EW WORLD ★★★★★
NEWS

Day of Destruction!

ASTEROID CRASHES TO EARTH!

ASTEROID: SAM NICHOLSON; EARTH: GLOBE PHOTOS



Dallas, you have a problem. ★ On a nippy December night on a tucked-away Burbank backlot, scads of workers are scurrying about, crunching data, pointing, clicking, hammering, drilling, and otherwise plotting the destruction of the Texas metropolis. Moments from now, after weeks of round-the-clock, to-the-millimeter scheming, the crew will unleash the city's biggest nightmare since J.R. Ewing. ★ The workers retreat hastily as the warning is barked:

"Watch your eyes!" Smoke floods the vicinity, explosions rip through the air, pyro-flashes blanket the dark sky, and flaming debris shoots every which way. Seconds later, annihilation has been achieved. A cheer rises slowly around the ashes. "It's sort of like performance art, huh?" grins high-tech wizard Sam Nicholson, surveying his smoldering success. "And this is the Big One."

Or so NBC hopes. *Asteroid*, a buckle-your-seat-belt Peacock miniseries about a meteorite plummeting toward earth, is headed for your television set Feb. 16 and 17. Boasting a hefty \$19 million budget and 265 boffo special-effects scenes, the four-hour TV movie represents

**A SNEAK PEEK AT THE
DEATH-DEFYING
WIZARDRY BEHIND
ASTEROID!**

perhaps the most ambitious sci-fi film ever made for the small screen. "A huge rock, exploding buildings, people fleeing...what's not to love?" raves NBC Entertainment president Warren Littlefield.

A marathon of thrills as government hunk **saves** the day!



See Michael Blehn rescue traumatized victims from the rubble!



**GIANT ATTACKS
INNOCENT SKYSCRAPER!**

An unidentified crew member adjusts the 30- by 50-foot model of a Dallas business district—just before annihilation

NBC is counting on ratings that will equal—if not top—its most ambitious homegrown movies of last year, *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Beast*, both of which averaged a boffo 30 million viewers per night. How will the other networks defend themselves? With another kind of star power: ABC is banking on a rare Meryl Streep TV movie to lure at least women away (see page 46); Fox will stick with its top show, *The X-Files*; CBS will air the feature film *Dave*, with Kevin Kline, on Sunday. "Obviously the muscle NBC is able to exert makes them formidable no matter what," says Kelly Kahl, CBS Entertainment scheduling VP. "But I expect *Asteroid* to skew like their minis in the past—fairly young and male. With *Dave*, we're looking for something middle-of-the-road, with wide appeal to all age groups, to

by **DAN SNIERSON**

"THANK GOD THAT NO ONE WAS KILLED, BUT WE ENDED UP WITH STUFF YOU NEVER SEE IN MOVIES MADE FOR TV," SAYS DAVIS

men and women. It's a broad comedy, an alternative to the end of the world or weeping with Meryl Streep."

Asteroid was born back in 1994, after NBC movies chief Lindy DeKoven saw news reports about meteors colliding with Jupiter and promptly dialed up producer John Davis (*Waterworld*, *Daylight*). Davis then developed an action-adventure drama about American heroes racing to save the world from destruction, though Dallas and Kansas City don't fare so well. Michael Biehn (*The Terminator*) was tapped to star as a gritty Federal Emergency Management Agency director; Annabella Sciorra (*Jungle Fever*) plays the Colorado astronomer who first charts the impending disaster. "There's definitely more of a theatrical quality to this," notes DeKoven, "unlike any other miniseries we've done before."

It's an offer you've probably found hard to ignore. In typical Peacock style, the network has bombarded the public since No-

vember sweeps with on-air spots, shrink-wrapped buses, and radio campaigns (win a free telescope to spot your own catastrophe!); a corner of the network's Burbank studio lot is even being remodeled to look like it had suffered an asteroid collision, complete with smashed cars and apocalyptic rubble. Total promo bill: \$2 million.

NBC didn't skimp on explosives, either. During production, Nicholson's visual-effects company, Stargate Films (*Ghostbusters II*, *Twister*), burned through 40,000 gallons of liquid propane (for fire effects), 2,000 gallons of liquid nitrogen (for steam), and 500 black-powder bombs. But there were more serious costs. "I don't think any of us knew how daunting a task this was going to be," sighs exec producer Davis, of several close calls for crew members. "Thank God no one was killed. But we ended up with stuff you never see in movies made for TV."

One of the 200-member Stargate crew had to be treat-



READY!

The finishing touches are put on the model dam



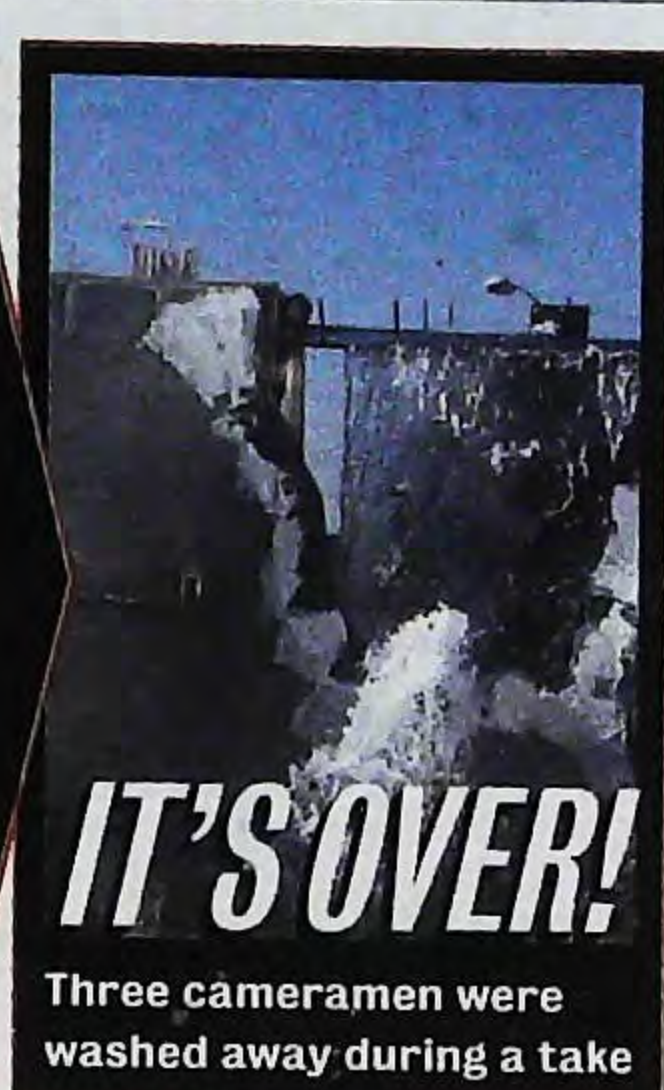
SET!

A 12-foot-high, 15-foot-wide wall, the dam is ready to blow



GO!

40,000 gallons of water are forced through the structure



IT'S OVER!

Three cameramen were washed away during a take

ed for burns after the set heaters prematurely ignited a bomb; another wound up with "an oily, smoking head of hair," says Nicholson, when a machine blew up in his face yet did not injure him. Nicholson nearly bought the farm when a 200-foot fireball from a detonated house just missed his hovering helicopter.

Fitting this big-bang effort into a small-screen schedule provided additional challenges. *Asteroid's* principal photogra-

phy took less than 60 days—in L.A. and Denver—with only 60 more devoted to postproduction, right up to airdate. In comparison, postproduction on effects-heavy feature films can take six months. "It's like an elephant sitting on my face," notes director Bradford May. "A male elephant."

Here's an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at some of the toughest—and most spectacular—sequences, shot primarily at Stargate's Burbank studios:

★ The pre-pulverized version of a Dallas business district, a 30-foot- by 50-foot model (a portion of which can be seen on page 29), required eight weeks to construct. Lined with small explosives, the set was built on a carpet suspended above a rolling contraption designed to simulate ground-rippling shock waves from an asteroid smash. (By the way, the prop asteroids, which weighed anywhere from 50 to 700 pounds, were made from lava and prettied up with

pumice, glitter, and iridescent paints.) This sequence had to be shot twice because the roller hit a snag during the first run, "destroying" only half the model. (It took another week to refurbish it for a reshoot.) What the viewer will see, says May, "are cars flipping and exploding, people running on fire, people blowing out of windows of buildings, and just overall hell on earth."

★ The giant crater and firebaked Dallas—post-impact

(below, left)—required a second intricate model that also took eight weeks to build. Made of wood, steel mesh, and fotex (a flameproof plaster), it's wired to leak smoky liquid nitrogen. "Everybody kept sliding into the hole because it was so steep. We all had crater-burn skid marks," says Nicholson. Shooting lasted for two weeks inside the crater, though this wasn't live action; actors were filmed in front of green screens and later edited into about 80 shots. "When you're throwing yourself off balance, pretending to be on a building shaking in an earthquake, it looks ridiculous," notes Biehn. "I'm always amazed how good it turns out, because while you're doing it with no set behind you, you're thinking 'God, this is silly.'"

★ To create the dam busting and flooding of a street in Kansas City (above), the crew crafted a 12-foot-high, 15-foot-wide wall made of pyrocl, a featherweight substance that "looks like cement but breaks like eggshells," according to

Nicholson. Once the dam was detonated, 10 mortars blasted hundreds of gallons of water at speeds up to 150 mph. ("We ended up cleaning the streets of Burbank for a week," Nicholson notes.) The force of the water flow—40,000 gallons in 15 seconds—washed away three cameramen during a take; they resurfaced, but two cameras totalling \$80,000 were ruined.

IF THE FINAL version gets your rocks off, so to speak, consider it an appetizer; for *Asteroid* is just one of several meteorites-on-a-collision-course-with-earth movies in the works. Two feature films begin shooting this spring: Michael Bay will direct Touchstone's *Armageddon*, and Mimi Leder will helm *Deep Impact* for Paramount and DreamWorks. In addition, James Cameron (currently making *Titanic*, which could end up being the most expensive disaster movie of all time) is producing an as-yet-untitled project. In 1997, it seems, no stone will be left unturned. ♦

CRATER FACE

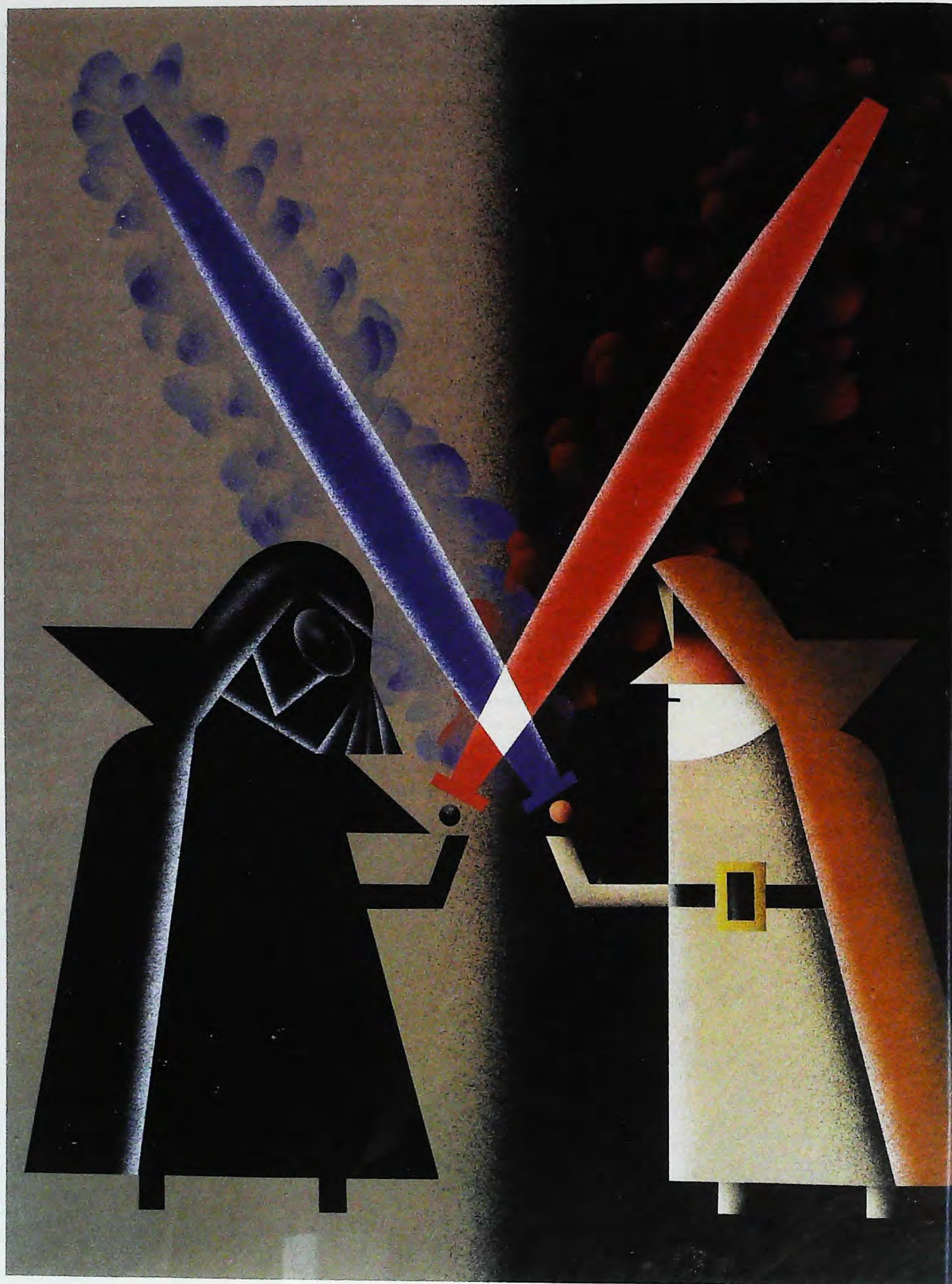
This 70-square-foot model of the asteroid crater took eight weeks to build



HOLED UP

Production spent two weeks in the crater to get footage to mesh with live shots





Empire of the Fun

A long time ago, in an America far, far away, 'Star Wars' was a force to be reckoned with, changing the way movies are made—and the way we watch them. **BY OWEN GLEIBERMAN**

IT DIDN'T JUST change the movies—it changed us. I was 18 years old, wrapping up my freshman year in college, when I walked into my local Michigan mall in May of 1977 to see **STAR WARS** (Twentieth Century Fox, PG). The collective anticipation wasn't like anything I'd encountered before. I remember passing a T-shirt store in one of the mall's plastic corridors, a store that was already selling *Star Wars* T-shirts. The shirts, the mall, the movie: All seemed linked, part of a meticulous pop continuum. (The hype was already taking over the galaxy.) And the final link in the chain, of course, was the audience itself.

George Lucas built *Star Wars*, and we came. An ecstatically entertaining retro sci-fi adventure, fusing the clunky "innocence" of '50s outer-space serials, the oedipal design of the Arthurian legends, and the eye-zapping technology of a new era, the movie tapped into something at once superficial and deep, our yearning for a world in which good and evil could still stand apart with sublime clarity. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Darth Vader were like white and black chess kings; even their lightsabers were color coded. The ultimate popcorn movie, memorably dubbed by Pauline Kael "a box of Cracker Jack that is all prizes," *Star Wars*, with its eagerness and flash, its fairytale irresistibility, paved the way for a new era of demagogic comic-book moviemaking, one in which speed and action and special effects would take precedence over character, content, soul. Now, as the film is rereleased for its 20th anniversary, we'll come once more, not just to see the newly enhanced "Special Edition" but to reexperience the high of mass enthusiasm that George Lucas reintroduced to America.

To see *Star Wars* in a theater again,

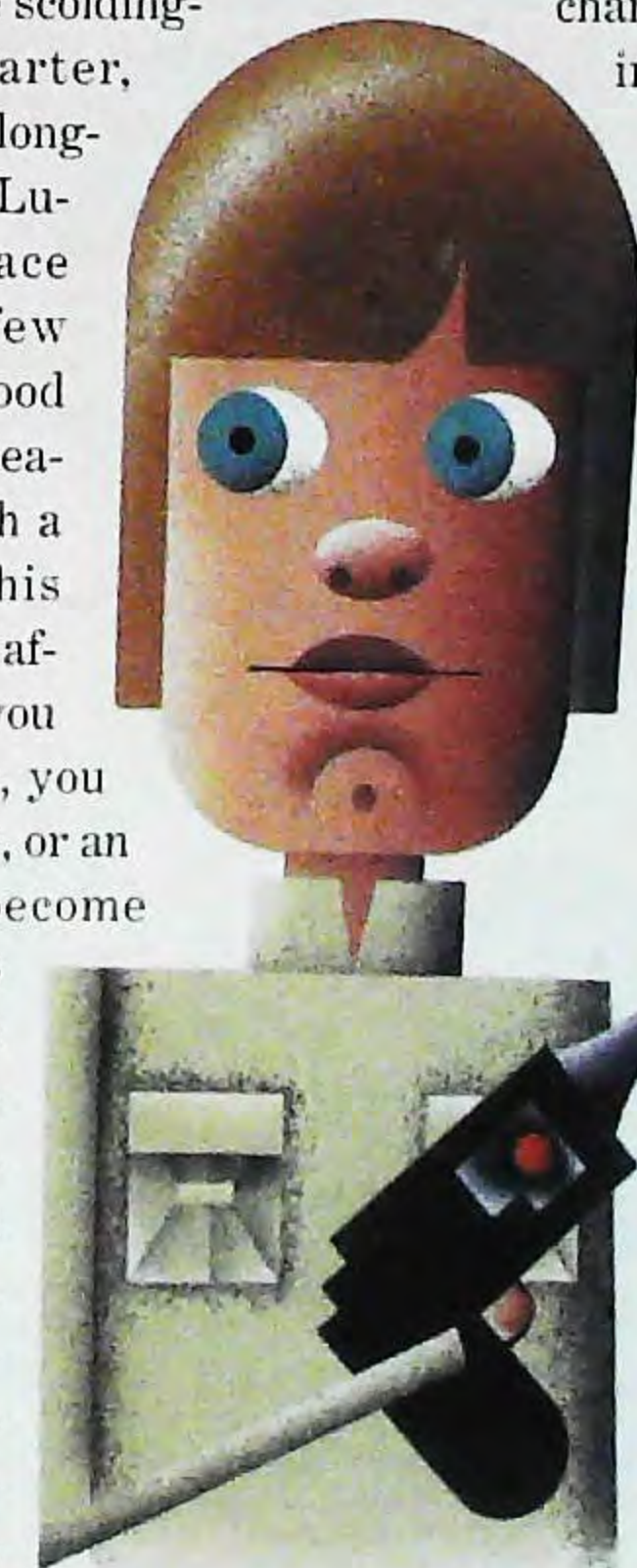
amid crowds cheering both the movie and their own propensity to cheer, is to feel an ambiguous surge of nostalgia, a nostalgia for the moment when we agreed to reunite as a culture by going back to the future. *Star Wars*, of course, was hardly the first movie to become a national event. There was *Gone With the Wind*. *Psycho* and *The Godfather*. And just two years before Lucas' extravaganza, in the summer of 1975, there was *Jaws*, the original modern blockbuster, a virtuoso exercise in primal terror that generated first-weekend grosses so staggering they effectively turned the movie industry on its head. Yet by the time that *Star Wars* was released, there'd been a further shift in the national mood—a yearning, after years of fragmentation and upheaval, after Vietnam and Watergate, for something bold and official and empowering. With the election of the scoldingly saintly Jimmy Carter, America was like a kid longing for a hot rod. Thus, Lucas' high-octane space odyssey. (Thus, a few years later, the feel-good presidency of Ronald Reagan, who came up with a PR coup in naming his cherished missile shield after Lucas' film.) When you went to see *Star Wars*, you didn't just go to a movie, or an Event. You went to become *part* of the Event—to merge with it. Lucas, in his creative innocence (if he had actually intended to do this it wouldn't have worked), created a zippy technodreamscape whose meaning was crystallized by the fact of its

unprecedented box office success. Luke Skywalker defeats the Empire by rising up out of himself to embrace something larger: the Force. The magic of *Star Wars* lies in the way that his triumph is mirrored, emotionally, by the audience's sense of joining something larger than itself—a universe of fans.

In the new, remastered *Star Wars*, the added effects, which range from leathery desert beasts inserted into already existing shots to an awkward new scene in which Han Solo bargains his way out of a jam with a computer-generated Jabba the Hutt, don't do much besides call attention to themselves. In general, I can't say that I'm wild about directors mucking around with our memories by fiddling with their classic films. In this case, however, the tweaking doesn't matter much, since the first half of the movie, where most of the

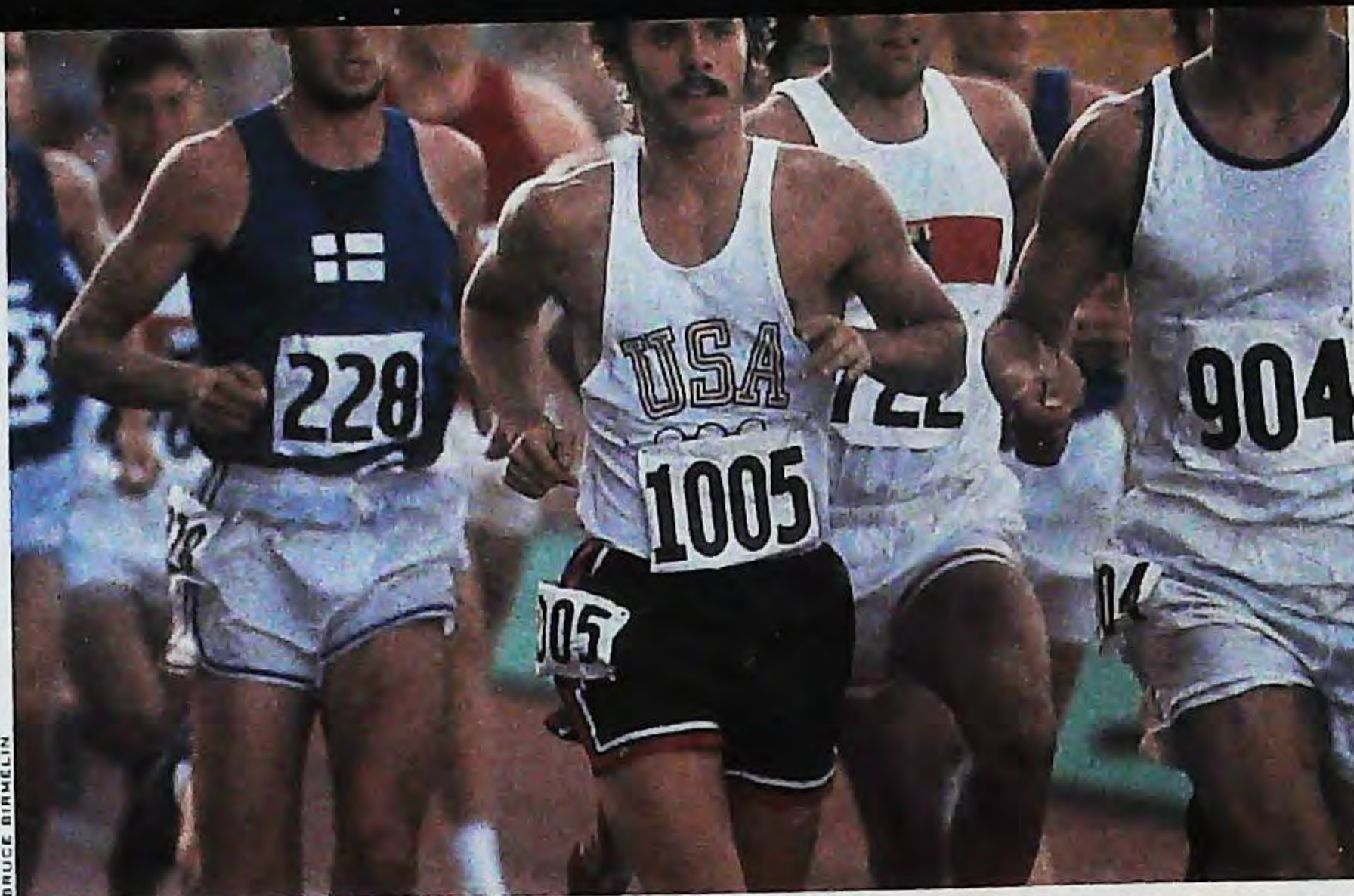
changes take place, is meandering and coy to begin with. I found I had less affection this time for the Mutt-and-Jeff antics of C-3PO and R2-D2; and Mark Hamill, with his gee-whiz '70s doofiness, is, at first, a shockingly callow hero—we might be watching the intergalactic coming-of-age of Richard Carpenter. To

give Lucas credit, though, much of the innocuousness is actually by design. Part of what's ingenious about *Star Wars* is the way the film seems to start out in the shaggier cinematic era it's about to leave behind. When Luke commences his training as a Jedi, hooking up with Princess Leia



(Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford, who never again looked like he was having this much fun), you can feel the testosterone leaking into the movie. Lucas' "serialized" plot has a capricious elegance: Once they're inside the Death Star, our heroes execute their moves as spontaneously as James Bond. And Darth Vader, the man with the machine face, remains an awesome image of future-shock fascism, with James Earl Jones' electromagnetized threats calling up a subliminal echo of the Wizard of Oz's lordly malevolence.

More than any other single sequence, the climactic dogfight is the one that made *Star Wars* revolutionary. A miracle of editing and special effects, it remains an elating action spectacle. Having revved up the pace notch by notch, Lucas now leaps into the joy of sheer momentum. Like Luke Skywalker himself, we start to take in the action not with our minds but through our senses. It's literally a *rush*. You can feel yourself turning off your brain and getting sucked into the movie's vortex, into a whole new age of cinema as sensation. Of course, that same thrill-ride rush is what Hollywood has been desperately repackaging for 20 years now. Only in *Star Wars*, however, was the Force this powerfully with the audience. We succeeded in making a movie so popular that just to sit there and watch it was to share in the victory. ♦



HE KEPT GOING...AND GOING: Jared Leto (center) as the energized Steve Prefontaine

A Stride Short

The runner's grand legacy outdistances 'Prefontaine'

STEVE JAMES and Peter Gilbert should be just the guys to tell the story of Steve Prefontaine, the great, world-class athlete who was killed in an auto accident in 1975 at the age of 24. The thoughtful filmmakers who turned the basketball aspirations of two unknown inner-city kids into the thrilling documentary *Hoop Dreams* are exactly the kind of storytellers who could convey the brilliance of the charismatic "Pre"—even to

moviegoers who may not be familiar with the story of the Oregon-born distance runner. (FYI: He broke every American distance record from 2,000 meters to 10,000 meters, and his activism on behalf of amateur athletes changed the rules of their games.) After all, it is to the uninitiated as well as to the knowledgeable that **PREFONTAINE** (*Hollywood, PG-13*) must appeal.

But by the time this devoted, mock-documentary biopic finishes rolling out the narrative (with a portion devoted to reenacting the horrifying terrorism that tore up the 1972 Munich Olympics), all the while being sensitive to the involvement of the late athlete's family, doing right by Nike (whose shoes Pre was one of the first to wear), and beating the competition from Warner Bros., which rolls out its own take on the subject this fall—well, Disney's *Prefontaine* ends up with the safe, well-controlled, "nice" look of a TV movie.

Jared Leto, that soulful eyeful from television's *My So-Called Life*, plays Pre with earnestness (he looks strikingly like the real guy seen in news footage). R. Lee Ermey (*Dead Man Walking*) is affecting as coach Bill Bowerman (who went on to become one of the founders of Nike); and as a fellow coach, Ed O'Neill gets a nice stretch away from the golden handcuffs of TV's *Married...With Children*. But in this standard athlete-dies-young presentation, we never do catch the magic that made Steve Prefontaine a towering figure. Instead, this Pre is a shaggy-haired, sentimental favorite—a teen angel rather than an Olympian. **C+** —Lisa Schwarzbaum

CRITICAL MASS

Here's how a sampling of critics and movie audiences from across the country grade 10 current releases.

	CINEMASCOPE Audience across the U.S.	ROGER EBERT Star of Ebert	GENE SISKEL Star of Ebert	JAMIE BERNARD Rough Rider Syndicate	STEVEN REA Rough Rider Syndicate	MIKE CLARK P.M. Today	ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY	AVERAGE*
ALBINO ALLIGATOR (Miramax)	—	C	C	—	B-	—	D+	C
BEVERLY HILLS NINJA (TriStar)	B+	—	—	F	C-	D	D+	D
EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU (Miramax)	B	A+	C+	C	B+	B	B-	B
FIERCE CREATURES (Universal)	—	C+	B+	—	—	—	C	B-
JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE (New Line)	B+	B-	C+	B+	B	B	B+	B
HAMLET (Castle Rock)	—	A	B+	C+	B	B	A-	B+
METRO (Touchstone)	B+	B	B-	D	—	D-	D-	C-
MOTHER (Paramount)	B+	B+	B-	A	B	B	B+	B+
THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY (Gramercy)	B-	B	B	B+	B	B-	B-	B
THE RELIC (Paramount)	B-	B	B	—	—	C-	C+	B-

*Average does not include Cinemascope.

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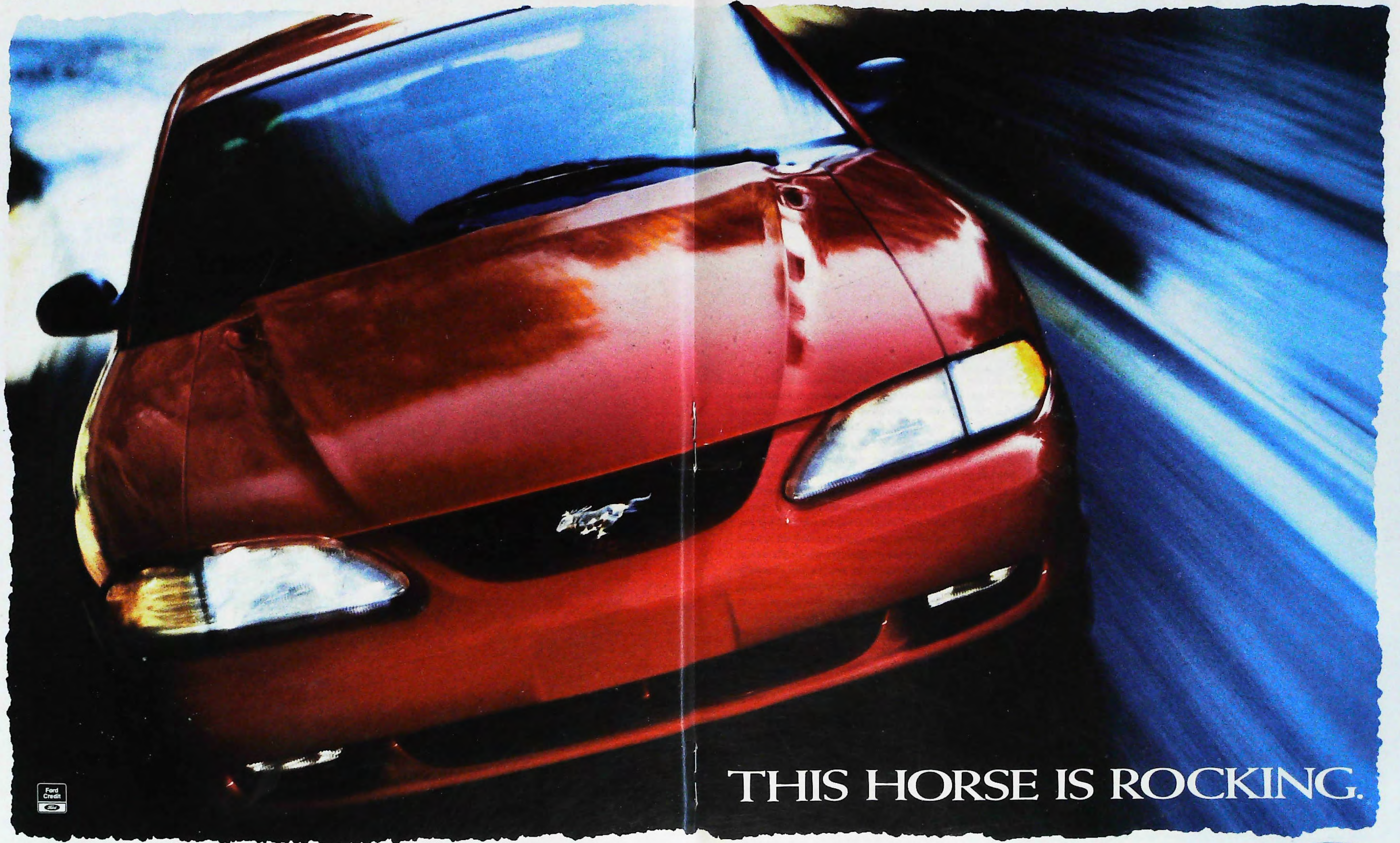


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'PREFONTAINE' COSTAR R. LEE ERMEY

THE SERGEANT JUST DOES IT

THE LAST TIME R. Lee Ermey stepped out of his cowboy boots, he stepped into the Nikes of Prefontaine's Bill Bowerman, the volatile University of Oregon track coach who guided Steve Prefontaine's illustrious career. Unbreachable authority figure, custom shoemaker to his athletes, and eventual cofounder of Nike, Bowerman came easily to Ermey, who has made a specialty of portraying tough nuts in about 35 movies since Francis Ford Coppola cast the former Marine drill sergeant as a helicopter pilot in 1979's *Apocalypse Now*.

"This guy [Bowerman] was handed to me on a silver platter," says Ermey, 52, whose face may be vaguely familiar but whose penetrating bark is unmistakable. "He's such a flamboyant character, I really didn't have to invent anything."

That is rare for Ermey, who likes to depart from the script whenever possible, even, he claims, in portions of his personal-best role as gunnery sergeant Hart-

man in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987): "Kubrick just let me write. He never directed me." Recently he's been heard shouting in *Seven* (as a police captain), *Toy Story* (as the voice of platoon leader Sarge), *Dead Man Walking* (as a murder victim's aggrieved father), and in a Coors Light commercial, in which it takes John Wayne to quiet him.

"I stumbled into show business when the Vietnam films were starting," says the Kansas native, who was studying drama in Manila when Coppola came to town. "After medical retirement from the Corps, I didn't know what to do, so I bought a rundown bar and whorehouse in Okinawa." As Ermey tells it, GIs got "honorary memberships" for helping him renovate, but "I was

LEATHERNECK: The ex-Marine cobbles a career

doing a little black-marketing and the Okinawan FBI was hot on my trail, so I boogied on out to the Philippines." There he met Nila, his wife of 21 years.

Never shy or retiring, Ermey thinks of those as the not-so-bad old days. "I feel sorry for the kids today," he volunteers. "They can't have fun like we could. The worst thing we had to worry about was the clap. Today, you die. It just isn't fair."

He says the same about the fallen Steve Prefontaine, who died in a car wreck in 1975. Ermey loves what he calls "this little movie with a simple, heroic message," and expresses it by railing against its shoestring budget of \$8 million—and the fact that he worked for scale. "I don't know what it is with these idiots down there in Hollywood," he growls. "They just have no taste." —Bruce Fretts

Shooting Up From the Hip

Tupac Shakur and Tim Roth get loose in 'Gridlock'd'

WE'LL NEVER know if Tupac Shakur could have been a movie star. But **GRIDLOCK'D** (*Gramercy, R*), which he completed two months before his death in a still-unsolved shooting incident last September, proves that he had the dynamism and flair of a major screen actor. Written and directed by Vondie Curtis Hall, the movie, set in the squalid backstreets of Detroit, is a vibrantly gritty lower-depths comedy, a tale of hapless junkie thieves, played by Shakur and Tim Roth, who bum around the city like a couple of alley cats, torn between their desire to score and their desperation to kick. As *Gridlock'd* goes on, the two have run-ins with cops, drug dealers, gangsters, and a welfare bureaucracy so rusty and sclerotic you'd call it Kafkaesque were there any real design to it. Desperate to get into rehab, they're tossed from one ugly fluorescent-lit government office to the next, a comedy of urban errors that escalates in insanity when the police mistake them for killers. *Gridlock'd* doesn't have the imaginative vision of a movie like *Trainspotting*, yet it's more literally true to the haphazard torpor of the junkie life than anything we've seen on screen since *Drugstore Cowboy*.

Making his debut as a filmmaker, Curtis Hall, an actor himself (*Chicago Hope*, *William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*), shows a gift for back talk and confrontation, for the hardscrabble comedy of urban decay, and for an electric storytelling style that sometimes shades off into B-movie glibness. *Gridlock'd* opens with a jolt: On New Year's Eve, Stretch (Roth) and Spoon (Shakur), holed up in their garbage-strewn loft, discover that Cookie (Thandie Newton), the slinky beauty they're with, has overdosed herself into a coma. They drag her to the hospital and go off into the night, numb but shaken, determined to change their lives. As it turns out, the three are



HEAD CASES: Shakur (left) and Roth find the humor in their daft Detroit junkies

partners, members of a bohemian spoken-word/jazz trio. They play together, live together, sometimes even sleep together. But from the moment Stretch and Spoon reach the street, with Cookie lying in limbo, the two men are such raggedly ill-disciplined lowlifes—at times, they seem like homeless derelicts—that I never really bought them as quasi-professional musicians.

Still, if the setup is facile, what follows has a bombed-out authenticity. Curtis Hall has caught the bottom-feeder enervation of heroin addiction—the fact that most of it consists of shooting up, nodding out, talking about scoring, going out to score, and then starting the whole business over again. The fun of the movie lies in the way that Roth and Shakur manage to seem feverishly alive amid all this manic-depressive running in place. More than any other contemporary British actor, Roth adores playing scuzz-ball Americans. He makes the dense, gawky Stretch defiantly myopic, a hustler who can't focus on anything but what's directly in front of him. As for Shakur, with his morose elegance and beautiful liquid eyes, he lends Spoon a tremor of sorrow, projecting a supple emotionalism almost

entirely at odds with his gangsta-prince image—the hell-bent rap nihilist so intoxicated by the "thug life" that, in the end, he literally appeared to be courting his own murder. To a true thug, of course, vulnerability is unthinkable; it makes you look soft. But as every good actor since Brando has understood, vulnerability can lure a movie audience right into your soul. Shakur had it to spare, along with many other qualities: wit, sexiness, a self-involvement poetic in its intensity. His tragedy may ultimately be that he didn't believe his humanity mattered. **B** —OG

Kung Phooey

Chris Farley is no Jackie Chan in 'Beverly Hills Ninja'

FOR THE FIRST few minutes of **BEVERLY HILLS NINJA** (*TriStar, PG-13*), it looks as if Chris Farley may have finally found a movie to match the size of his talents. As an orphan raised in Japan by martial-arts masters, Farley displays a hippo-ballet grace while bonking himself on the head with various

instruments of death. This chop-stick generates a few belly-laugh-inducing quips ("Sensei is going to kill me!" Farley panics after smashing a shelfful of ancient artifacts). But as soon as the action switches to L.A., a yawner plot about Farley busting up a yen-counterfeiting ring kicks in—and slowly starts to squeeze the life out of the movie.

Ninja casts about for whale-out-of-water humor as Farley's long-sheltered Haru grapples with such newfangled inventions as metal detectors and seat belts. But when the writers run out of ideas, they simply have Farley walk into a lamppost, or cop from old *SNL* skits: In one gratuitous scene, Farley reprises his flesh-dancing strip routine. (Can we please have a ban on the use of "I'm Too Sexy" in movies?) In another painful bit, he dresses up as a Japanese chef in a pale riff on John Belushi's samurai that's the most offensive Asian caricature since Mickey Rooney's bucktoothed *Breakfast at Tiffany's* neighbor.

Amazingly enough, that's not even the most egregious racial stereotype in *Ninja*, a dubious distinction that goes to Farley's fellow ex-*SNL*er Chris Rock. As a lazy bellhop, Rock bugs out his eyes and blurts out his lines like a latter-day Stepin Fetchit. Nicollette Sheridan also shows up, as Farley's love interest; mostly she just stands around in tight outfits, much like she did in last summer's awful *Spy Hard*.

Director Dennis Dugan has done fine TV work (*NYPD Blue*, *Chicago Hope*), but with 1996's Adam Sandler stinker *Happy Gilmore* and this sad affair, he seems stuck in a lamebrained *SNL* rut. Somebody stop this guy before he makes *Goat Boy: The Movie*. **D+** —Bruce Fretts



YO, JUMBO! Farley shoulders a low blow

THE WEEK

Reviews by OWEN GLEIBERMAN
and LISA SCHWARZBAUM

NEW RELEASES

ALBINO ALLIGATOR (Miramax, R) Three New Orleans punks (Matt Dillon, Gary Sinise, and William Fichtner), on the run from a screwed-up robbery attempt, bust into an atmospheric basement bar late at night, scramble the lives of the five folks inside, and wreak twisted psychological and physical damage on one another as the cops and media close in, in a contrived and violent indie drama from twist-loving Kevin Spacey, making his directorial debut. It's easy to see why the story appealed to the star of *Seven* and *The Usual Suspects*—all those loose-cannon characters, liable to blow at any moment—but Spacey the director relies far too heavily (as neo-noirists do) on moody compositions and close-ups to fill the space where motivation and character building ought to be. The script, by first-timer Christian Forte, is not much help, alternately stilted, grandiose, and didactic (an "al'bo 'gator," we're informed in a long speech by the group's loosest cannon, is a "weak and useless" member of the pack sacrificed by others for the group's gain). Ultimately, the talented cast—among them M. Emmet Walsh, Faye Dunaway, Skeet Ulrich, and Viggo



DUNAWAY WITH: Faye joins a choice cast of *Albino* hostages

Mortensen—play to their easiest star turns rather than their most interesting strengths. **D+** —LS

JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE (New Line, PG-13) Further proof that the Hong Kong-based superstar is the Fred Astaire of action-adventure movies: There's a great, balletic fight sequence in this happy addition to Chan's *Police Story* series in which Jackie holds off a barrage of bad guys using a tall stepladder and a broomstick, demonstrating all the aplomb of Astaire romancing a hat rack. But then, in the course of this appealing production (directed by

Chan's *Rumble in the Bronx* colleague Stanley Tong and dubbed with gusto), Jackie also displays grace and good humor on a snowboard, on stilts, and underwater—pursued by sharks. The plot is a merry James Bondish mess, jumping from Ukraine to Australia and involving a stolen nuclear warhead, a rogue CIA agent, and a Russian spy agency, with Jackie caught, as usual, accidentally in the middle, just trying to do the right thing, as usual, in his amiable, kick-ass way. It's only too bad *Supercop* power femme Michelle Khan isn't here to keep our hero company. **B+** —LS

IN THEATERS

EVITA (PG-13) A bombastically glossy musical epic. Madonna's singing is beautiful, yet there's no twinkle of ambitious joy to her performance. She recedes into the murk of composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's luridly dated kitsch. **C-** (#358, Dec. 20) —OG

FIERCE CREATURES (PG-13) It reteams the players from 1988's uproarious *A Fish Called Wanda*—John Cleese, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kevin Kline, and Michael Palin. You go in hoping for something ticklish and inspired, but *Fierce Creatures* is mostly a mess: toothless when it should be nasty, not so much mad-cap as merely frantic. Cleese, with his peerless gift for pushing civility into apoplexy, ought to be perfect as the head of a zoo that's spinning out of control. But he's a passive ringmaster here. Only Kline, in a dual role, revives the earlier film's fizzy high. **C** (#363, Jan. 24) —OG

HAMLET (PG-13) Shot on huge, bold, dazzlingly well-lit sets, Kenneth Branagh's four-hour version takes place in the "objective" glare of what could almost be a surgeon's operating theater. (It's like watching an Elizabethan version of *The Shining*.) The illumination is visual, and metaphysical, too: This Hamlet remains torturously rational, a man pinned down under the white-hot klieg lights of his own consciousness. If the film's running time sounds like a stunt, it's not: What is gained is a newly slow and subtle arc to Hamlet's descent. **A-** (#363, Jan. 24) —OG

JERRY MAGUIRE (R) Cast as high-powered sports agent Jerry Maguire, Tom Cruise gives his deftest performance yet as a slickster grasping for the decency in himself. **A-** (#357, Dec. 13) —OG



DECORATORS OF THE WEEK

The Martha Stewart-esses of 'Turbulence'

Only in the movies would an airliner's crew have the time and spirit to decorate the cabin for a preholiday flight, stringing lavish garlands and colored lights, donning antlers and Santa caps, and screening *It's a Wonderful Life* in flight.

LOST LYRIC OF THE WEEK



"She's a new world Madonna with a golden touch"

In *Evita*, this line from Tim Rice's song "Rainbow Tour" has been changed to "She's a lady of the new world...." Shucks, now Disney can't excerpt it in ads, and we can't make fun of it.

METRO (R) Eddie Murphy is back to tired old tricks, playing an uninspired variation on the cop character he's done for years. Only this time he's not even funny. As a hostage negotiator in pursuit of a murderous creep (Michael Winnett), Murphy looks grimly chic throughout the formulaic ordeal—a notably sadistic exercise involving lots of beating, shooting, stabbing, and the stalking and torture of a woman. **D-** (#363, Jan. 24) —LS

MICHAEL (PG) John Travolta, as an archangel with big wings and a bigger attitude, gets to play a saint and act mildly sinful at the same time. These heavenly-savior roles are starting to make him look like a walking mission statement. **D+** (#361, Jan. 10) —OG

MOTHER (PG-13) Albert Brooks takes an archetype of Jewish comedy—the mother as destroyer—and reconfigures her as a daffy WASP. Debbie Reynolds gives a deliciously off-kilter performance, speaking in pure honey-sweet tones yet planting tiny seeds of disapproval. **B+** (#362, Jan. 17) —OG

THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT (R) An exultant comedy of American repression and revolt. Milos Forman's docudrama tells the wild, circuslike tale of *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt's First Amendment battles. Woody Harrelson's audacious performance takes off after Flynt is shot and paralyzed. And Courtney Love, as Flynt's wife, glides from kinky abandon to stark tragedy. **A** (#361, Jan. 10) —OG

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY (PG-13) In aiming for a new kind of lit-drama cool, director Jane Campion freezes the warmth out of Henry James' expansive heart. Nicole Kidman stars as the young American heroine, Isabel Archer; John Malkovich, in full *Dangerous Liaisons* lizard style, plays the coldly snobby aesthete she falls for; and Barbara Hershey is the worldly schemer who introduces the one to the other for reasons of her own. **B-** (#362, Jan. 17) —LS

THE RELIC (R) Engagingly absurd creature-feature hokum that owes a debt to the giant-whatsit-trashes-downtown genre of the '50s. Forget the cast; the true star is the monster, a computer-generated beastie that's like a rhino with bad teeth crossed with a really big velociraptor. **C+** (#363, Jan. 24) —Ty Burr

SCREAM (R) Poised on the knife edge between parody and homage, Wes Craven's thriller is an ingeniously unsettling tribute to the splatterific teen horror films of the '80s. **A-** (#361, Jan. 10) —OG

BOX OFFICE

'BEVERLY HILLS' TOPS

IN THE BATTLE of the ex-SNL comics, Chris Farley's *Beverly Hills Ninja* kicked Eddie Murphy's *Metro* to dominate the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. With a PG-13 rating and 111 more theaters than the R-rated *Metro*, *Ninja* pulled down the second-biggest debut gross ever for the MLK weekend (*Higher Learning* nabbed \$13.3 million in 1995). Meanwhile, there weren't many nibbles for Kevin Spacey's directorial debut, *Albino Alligator*, which earned \$101,000 on 12 screens, but *Jerry Maguire* hit the \$100 million mark on Saturday, just in time for Tom Cruise's big Sunday-night win at the Golden Globes.



METRO STOPPED: Murphy gets shaken down

WEEKEND GROSS*	TOP 20	GROSS TO DATE	WEEKS IN RELEASE
1 \$12.2	BEVERLY HILLS NINJA TriStar, Chris Farley	\$12.2	1
2 \$11.4	METRO Touchstone, Eddie Murphy	\$11.4	1
3 \$8.9	EVITA Hollywood/Cinergi, Madonna	\$23.1	4
4 \$7.9	THE RELIC Paramount, Penelope Ann Miller	\$20.0	2
5 \$7.5	JERRY MAGUIRE TriStar, Tom Cruise	\$102.8	6
6 \$7.3	SCREAM Dimension, Neve Campbell	\$59.5	5
7 \$7.0	MICHAEL New Line, John Travolta	\$72.5	4
8 \$3.8	THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT Columbia, Woody Harrelson	\$13.0	4
9 \$3.6	JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE New Line, Jackie Chan	\$10.9	2
10 \$3.2	101 DALMATIANS Walt Disney, Glenn Close	\$129.8	8
11 \$3.1	MOTHER Paramount, Albert Brooks	\$5.6	4
12 \$2.7	ONE FINE DAY 20th Century Fox, Michelle Pfeiffer	\$41.0	5
13 \$2.5	TURBULENCE MGM, Ray Liotta	\$8.4	2
14 \$2.3	THE ENGLISH PATIENT Miramax, Ralph Fiennes	\$34.1	10
15 \$1.8	SHINE Fine Line, Geoffrey Rush	\$10.7	9
16 \$1.8	EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU Miramax, Goldie Hawn	\$2.2	4
17 \$1.6	THE PREACHER'S WIFE Touchstone, Denzel Washington	\$44.2	6
18 \$1.6	GHOSTS OF MISSISSIPPI Castle Rock, Alec Baldwin	\$11.8	5
19 \$1.6	BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA Paramount, Animated	\$61.1	5
20 \$1.5	THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY Gramercy, Nicole Kidman	\$2.0	4

WEEKEND PER-SCREEN AVERAGE*	TOP 10 / PER SCREEN	NO. OF SENSORS†
1 \$9,662	EVITA Hollywood/Cinergi	923
2 \$8,182	MOTHER Paramount	380
3 \$6,535	EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU Miramax	268
4 \$6,019	SHINE Fine Line	306
5 \$5,786	BEVERLY HILLS NINJA TriStar	2,112
6 \$5,703	METRO Touchstone	2,001
7 \$4,226	THE ENGLISH PATIENT Miramax	553
8 \$3,858	SCREAM Dimension	1,904
9 \$3,720	THE RELIC Paramount	2,128
10 \$3,288	JERRY MAGUIRE TriStar	2,286

SOURCE: EXHIBITOR RELATIONS CO. INC.
*WEEKEND OF JAN. 17-19 (ALL DOLLAR FIGURES IN MILLIONS)
†DRAWN FROM 20 TOP-GROSSING FILMS
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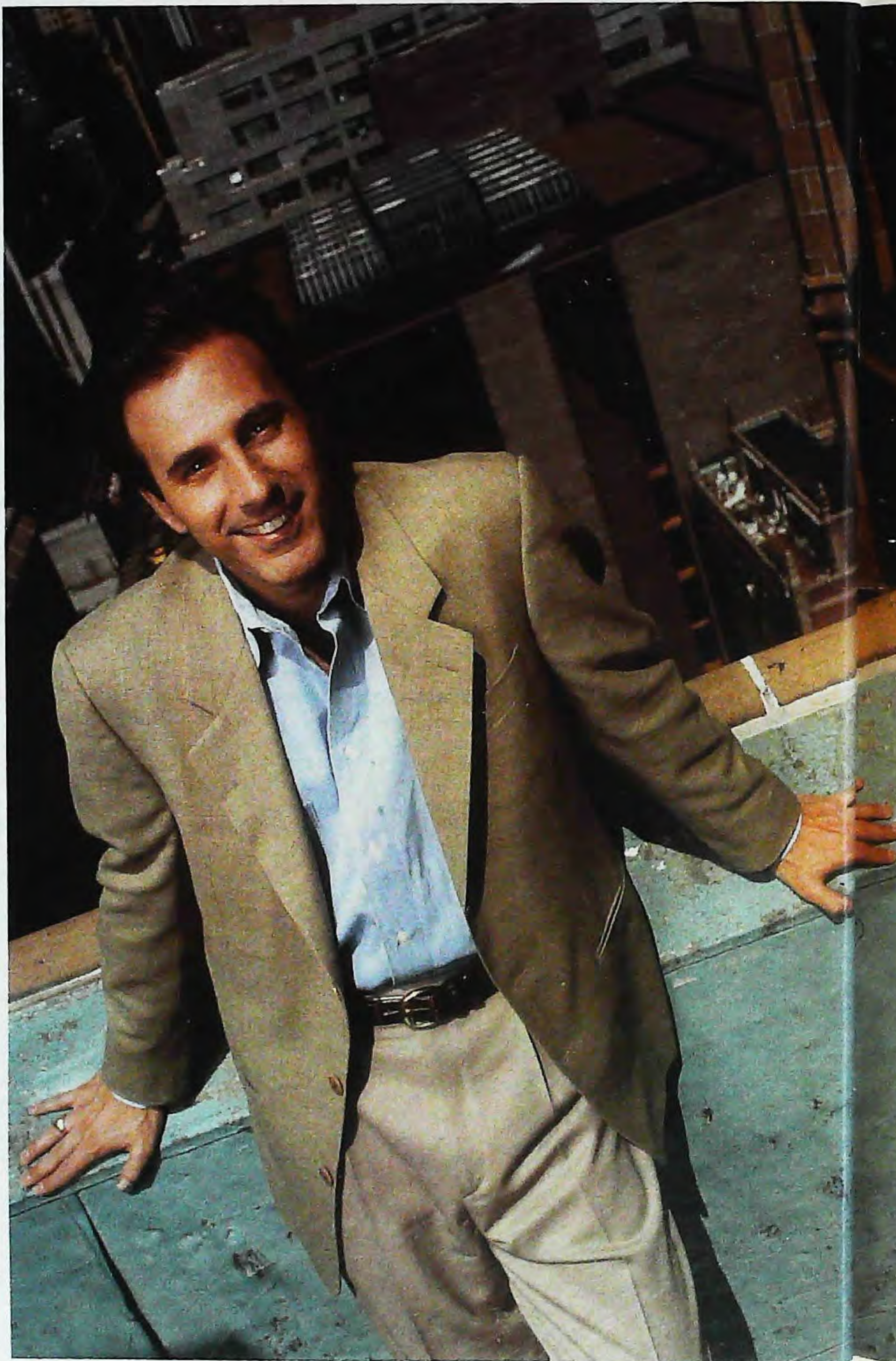
In the wake of grumpy Bryant Gumbel's departure, NBC hopes shiny happy cohost Matt Lauer has the ballast to keep 'Today' on top of the morning news heap. BY KEN TUCKER

MORNING NEWS lost its primary source of personality when Bryant Gumbel retired from the **TODAY** show (NBC, weekdays, 7-9 a.m.) on Jan. 3. For 15 years, Gumbel had been providing as much drama as is permitted in his field, doing it by being serious when the job usually calls for perkiness and being regularly aggressive in hard-news interviewing style when common wisdom holds that you should just lie back and be a nice guy. Gumbel's penchant for grumpiness could be irritating: There were many mornings when you couldn't help wondering why the devil he was bothering to interview some lame movie star so clearly beneath him. But this attitude took on resonance over the years, and when you add the fact that no other African American had been seen so three-dimensionally for so long on television, Gumbel came off very well indeed—an intelligent skeptic who knew that, beloved or detested, character counts for something among TV viewers.

So now the question is, what is the character of Gumbel's replacement, former *Today* news anchor Matt Lauer? Well, let me put it this way: If Gumbel was the Sinatra of his genre—authoritative, moody, and not to be messed with—Lauer is the Jack Jones of morning television: lightweight but easy to listen to, a tad too slick for his own good but perfectly likable.

The *Today* show has a rocky history of anchor replacement. I still get hot flashes recalling the stories of *All About Eve* viciousness that ensued when Deborah Norville usurped Jane Pauley in 1989. Compared with that, Lauer already

LAUER POWER: Matt blossoms on *Today*



seems not only relaxed and assured but well liked by his couch mates. Katie Couric went so far as to sing "Welcome, Matt" to the melody of the *Welcome Back, Kotter* theme on *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, an assignment so far beyond the call of duty, I wondered whether *Today* executive producer Jeff Zucker had dusted off a Norville hex doll and put a spell on our Katie.

So far, Lauer has only gotten flustered when forced to referee segments in which his all-too-frequently-seen CNBC colleague Geraldo Rivera deafeningly debates anyone who doesn't think O.J. did it; the slim, soft-spoken Lauer isn't built for these kinds of hokey TV wrassling matches. And right now, it's difficult to imagine him grilling weaselly congresspersons with Gumbel-weight force—or indeed, whether he'll prove anywhere near as well prepared and quick on follow-up questions as his mentor. But I suppose we have to give Lauer time to lose his waxy local-news sheen. (An unexpected benefit of Lauer's move to anchor, by the way, is his temporary *Today* news-desk replacement, Ann Curry, who not only reads the headlines with intelligent comprehension—all you can ask of a talking head—but also reveals with some regularity the best wry smile on TV today.)

The one thing that makes the *Today* show a chore to watch isn't Lauer's fault anyway. It's that damn window onto Rockefeller Center, where clusters of tourists stand with signs imparting brilliant aperçus such as "We Love Matt!" It's the a.m. equivalent of NBC's p.m. hellishness: the nightly prodding of Jay Leno's audience into rabble-rousers. Even when the blue wall goes up behind the *Today* anchors (the better to conduct an interview in peace), you can still see the vague outlines of restless passersby. It's impossibly distracting; I always wonder who's going to be the first disgruntled nutball to crash through the window screaming "Chicago Bulls!" or "Love ya, Mom!"

When that day comes, however, I'm sure that Lauer will handle it well, perhaps pushing Couric under the sofa for safety, or pulling weatherman Al Roker in front of them both as a shield. I'd expect nothing less from the man who succeeds Bryant Gumbel. *Today*: **B**

FOR WEATHER GURU ROKER, IT'S RAINING JOBS

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

WITH HIS *TODAY* SHOW weather gig, a PBS travel series (*Going Places*), an MSNBC game show (*Remember This?*), and his own website (you guessed it—www.roker.com), 42-year-old Al Roker is threatening to take away James Brown's title as the hardest-working man in show business. Although, unlike the Godfather of Soul, Roker points out, "I will not wear spandex." Still, Roker found time in his busy schedule to sit down to lunch at a Manhattan sushi restaurant (final tally: \$75.38) and discuss his brilliant careers:

What drives you to work so hard? It comes from my dad. He started out as a bus driver in New York City, became a chief dispatcher, and when he retired six years ago he was one of the heads of labor relations for the Transit Authority. He worked very hard, and that's how you get ahead. And let's face it, I'm not gonna get by on my looks.

Are you part of a weatherman fraternity with CBS *This Morning's* Mark McEwen and *Good Morning America's* Spencer Christian? Mark is my evil twin. No, I like Mark and Spencer a lot. It's interesting that on the three morning shows, up until this year, you had three African-American guys doing weather. And until Spencer had the hair transplants, three follicle-ly challenged African-American guys.

You've guested on *Seinfeld*, *The Single Guy*, and *NewsRadio*. What's the

secret of your acting success? The trick is to keep any acting bit to no more than 10 seconds. For 10 seconds, I'm Tom Cruise—show me the money! More than 10 seconds, there's a steep drop-off.

Your wife, Deborah Roberts, is an ABC correspondent. Is there any network rivalry between you? A couple of weeks ago she was doing *Good Morning America*, so I said, "This is great—we get up at the same time, have a cup of coffee together, and then I can crush you like a bug!" She didn't find that very humorous, so I didn't bring it up again.

Do you have any role models as a game-show host? I always admired Gene Rayburn. Watching him do *Match Game*, I thought, God, what a talent. And I loved Richard Dawson the first time he did *Family Feud*.

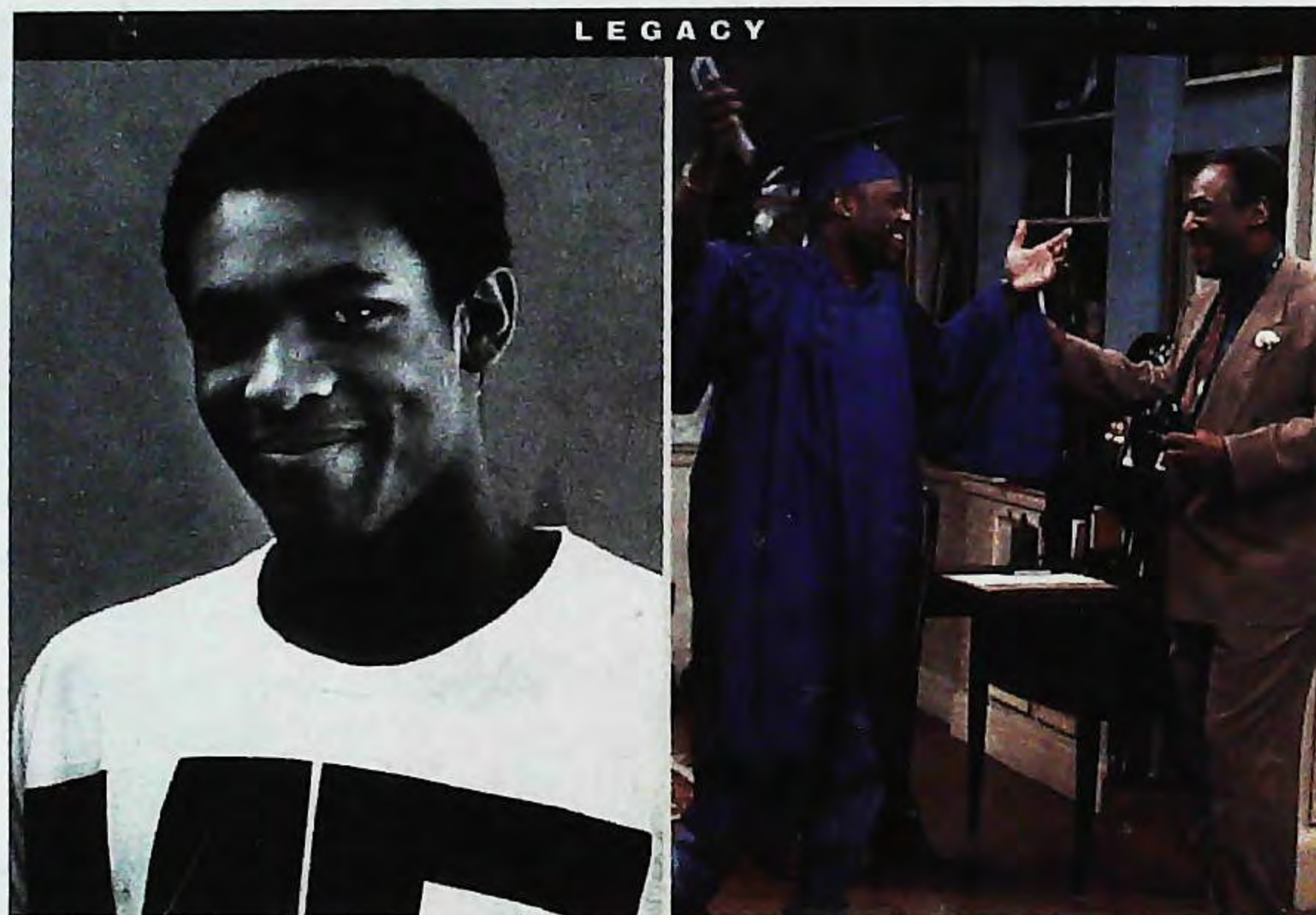
Do you kiss all the contestants like Dawson used to? No, I wear a full-body condom. —Bruce Fretts



HANDY MAN: Roker ably juggles a multitude of gigs

FREE!

SO COOL IT'S WORTH IT!
HERE'S HOW TO GET IT:



POWER OF THE SON

How Ennis' death will affect Cosby's current show remains unclear. Although the comedian plans to return to the sitcom after taking a week off, the network has no comment about future plotlines. Cosby had reportedly wanted Doug E. Doug's character to follow in Ennis' footsteps and work with disadvantaged kids. Whether that will still happen is up in the air. However, one thing is certain: Given his history, Cosby will find some way to deal with the tragedy in his art. Until then, fans will have to make do with the stark tribute flashed at the end of the Jan. 20 show: "My hero. My son." —*A.J. Jacobs*

UNCAP
THE
MOMENT



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY



JUST FOR THE SOUND OF IT



TV'S PRIME DIRECTIVE FOR FEBRUARY: BIG RATINGS!

STARS AND HYPE FOREVER

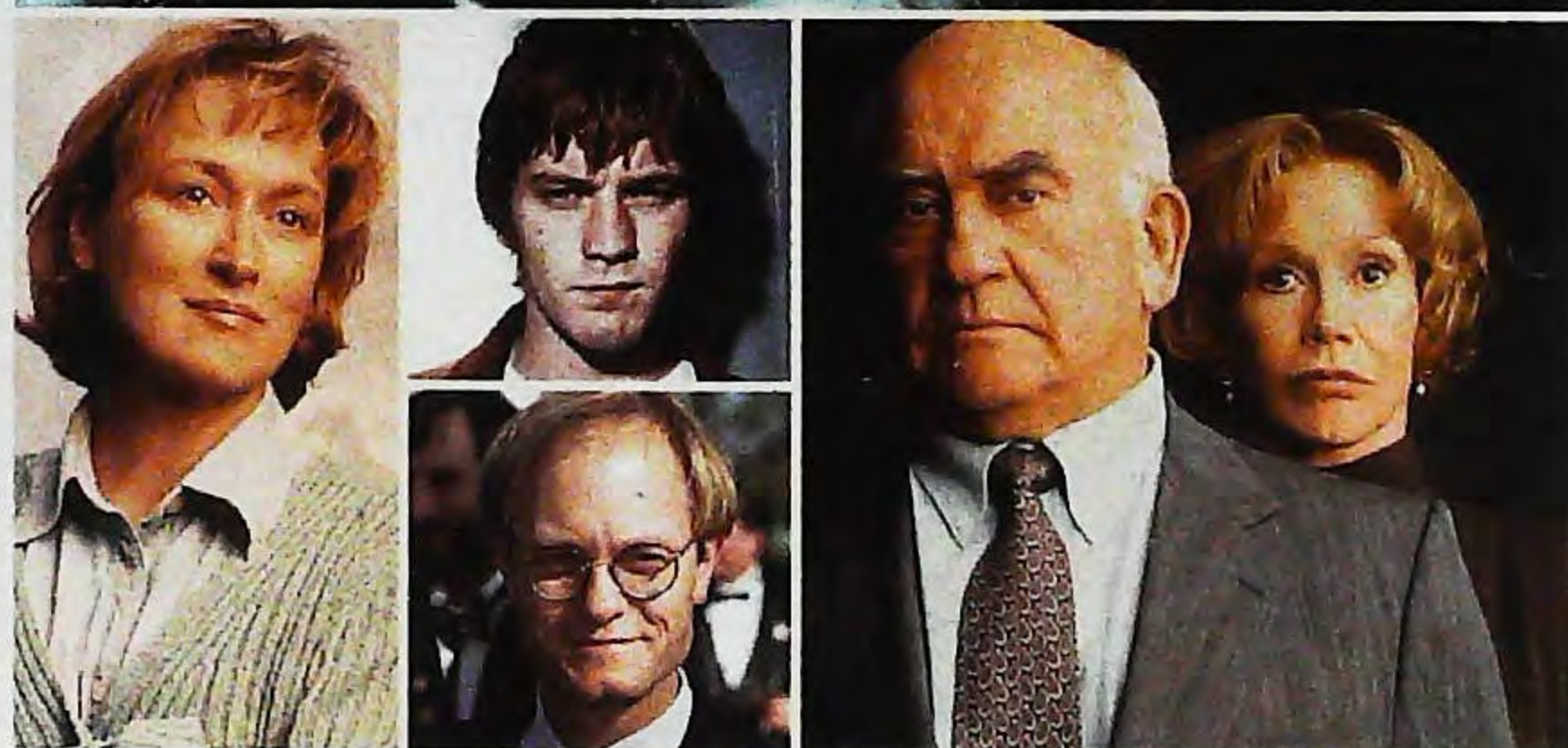
Meryl Streep, Alice Cooper, and Jodie Foster sweep onto TV. BY KRISTEN BALDWIN

AH, SWEEPS. The three times a year network execs treat viewers to above-average programming so their local stations can pull higher ratings (thus helping them earn bigger ad revenues). *The Drew Carey Show*, for example, is pulling out all the stops: "We have an episode with a lot of farting," says Carey. Here's a whiff of other highlights:

◆ **NBC** When Ewan McGregor (*Trainspotting*) contacted the *ER* producers to gush about the show, he didn't have to drop many hints before exec producer John Wells gave him a part. "It was just a fan call, and we were big fans of his," says Wells. In the episode (filmed almost entirely in Chicago), McGregor plays a robber who botches a holdup and ends up taking hostages, including Julianna Margulies' Nurse Hathaway (Feb. 13). For further trauma, NBC also has **ASTEROID** (Feb. 16 and 17, 9 p.m.), a miniseries starring a giant rock (see story on page 28).

◆ **ABC** In her first TV movie in nearly two decades, Meryl Streep counterprograms *Asteroid* in "...**FIRST DO NO HARM**" (Feb. 16, 9 p.m.), about a mother searching for a cure for her epileptic son. "This is something we thought about making as a feature, and we thought seven people would see it," says Streep, considered a female-viewer magnet. "The way to get the largest audience is to put it on TV." ABC is also offering **VOLCANO: FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN** (Feb. 23, 9 p.m.), with Dan Cortese as a skier at a resort perched on a lava-filled rock. Ed Asner is the cop, Mary Tyler Moore the victim, in **PAYBACK** (Feb. 10, 9 p.m.), a thriller that pairs the duo for the first time in 20 years.

◆ **CBS** Isabella Rossellini makes another prime-time appearance (she guested on *Friends* last October) in a two-part **CHICAGO HOPE** (Feb. 10 and 17, 10 p.m.) as a college prof trying to have a baby. "I saw her on [HBO's] *Crime of the Century* and thought she was terrific," says exec producer John Tinker. **PEARL** (Wednesdays, 8:30 p.m.) goes the stunt-o-rama route with three guest stars: Shock-rocker Alice Cooper cameos as a guardian angel (Feb. 12); nearly a third of the *Cheers* cast is reunited when Ted Danson stars as Pearl's (Rhea Perlman) late ex-husband (Feb. 19); and, speaking of husbands, Danny DeVito (Perlman's real-life hubby) plays a college dean who falls for Pearl (Feb. 5).



THE BIG-NAME GAME: (Clockwise) It's now *Voyager* for the Borg; Asner and Moore reunite; Pierce, in 'toon; Streep, in a TV first; *ER* guest McGregor

◆ **UPN** Trekkers will experience Collective joy when the infamous Borg make their first appearance on **STAR TREK: VOYAGER** (Feb. 12, 9 p.m.). Resistance is...well, you know.

◆ **Fox** Jodie Foster gives voice to an evil Betty Boop tattoo on **THE X-FILES** (Feb. 2, 9 p.m.). **MELROSE PLACE** celebrates its 150th episode with the two-hour "Great Sex-Pectations" (Feb. 3, 8 p.m.), with jilted fiancés (Jake) and re-re-seduced ex-husbands (Michael). No bombs, however. "We learned our lesson last year," says exec producer Aaron Spelling. John Waters visits **THE SIMPSONS** (Feb. 16, 8 p.m.) as a gay antiques collector, and on Feb. 23, *Frasier*'s Kelsey Grammer returns as sinister Sideshow Bob, with sitcom brother David Hyde Pierce in tow as Bob's sibling Cecil. "He's a little more finicky than Bob," says exec producer Bill Oakley, "with the same homicidal tendencies." —Additional reporting by Dan Snierson

A FELONY SO FUNNY... IT'S CRIMINAL



"UNFAILINGLY ENTERTAINING."—*New York Times*

LAWRENCE BLOCK

EDGAR AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR



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 NOW A SIGNET PAPERBACK

THE WEEK

A guide to notable programs by
BRUCE FRETTS (Times are Eastern
daylight and are subject to change.)

SERIES

IT'S TOUGH to make a living doing performance art these days, so perhaps it's no surprise that two practitioners have turned up in recurring sitcom roles as shrinks. Monologist Spalding Gray (*Swimming to Cambodia*, *Monster in a Box*) has taken **THE NANNY** (CBS, Wednesdays, 8-8:30 p.m.) as a patient, and his trademark deadpan provides a nice comic counterpoint to Fran Drescher's manic braying. Too bad the same can't be said for Mo'Gaffney, who's a big bore as Paul Reiser and Helen Hunt's marital therapist on **MAD ABOUT YOU** (NBC, Tuesdays, 8-8:30 p.m.). Gaffney, who costarred with Kathy Najimy in the Off Broadway production *The Kathy & Mo Show: Parallel Lives*, also appeared earlier this season on *Roseanne*, where she's now listed as a consultant. Since *Mad* and *Roseanne* air at the same time, isn't that a conflict of interest?

AFTER WORKING in the sizable shadow of partner Andre Braugher for the past four years, Kyle Secor has finally come into his own on **HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREET** (NBC, Fridays, 10-11 p.m.). No longer the squad's endearingly naive rookie,



VIEW TO A KYLE: *Homicide*'s Secor (with Braugher) makes his name

Secor's Tim Bayliss has begun to show an intriguing darker side this season (and Secor makes his directorial debut with the Jan. 31 episode). Nowhere was this more evident than in a recent episode in which we learned that Bayliss' obsession with child murders springs from the fact that he was sexually abused by his uncle. As Bayliss and Pembleton grilled a dead girl's mother (the shattering LaTanya Richardson), a surprise role reversal took place: The supersensitive Bayliss tried to bully her into a confession, while the stroke-enfeebled Pembleton played the good cop. With the recent on-screen romance between Reed Diamond and Michelle Forbes, Secor seems to have been liberated from his role as

Homicide's resident sex symbol. He's acting with newfound abandon, and the results are thrilling.

EVEN AS ITS scripts become increasingly ridiculous, **THE X-FILES** (Fox, Sundays, 9-10 p.m.) continues to distinguish itself with inspired guest-star casting. The latest addition to the stellar roster that includes Peter Boyle (an Emmy winner as psychic Clyde Bruckman) and Charles Nelson Reilly (as spaced-out writer Jose Chung): Rubén Blades, whose quietly humorous turn as Conrad Lozano, a cowboy-hat-wearing immigration official single-handedly redeemed an otherwise absurd episode. Helping Agents Mulder (David Duchovny) and Scully (Gillian Ander-

son) track a monster known as *el Chupacabra* ("the goatsucker"—don't ask), Blades' Lozano seemed a spiritual cousin to the long-suffering lawman he played in Robert Redford's underrated 1988 movie, *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Blades has such an easygoing screen presence, it makes you almost glad he lost his recent bid for the Panamanian presidency. Too bad he can't reprise his role as Lozano, who ended up dead at the episode's end. Then again, this is *The X-Files*...

MOVIES

BOLDLY TAKING on the role that made a movie star out of young Julie Harris in 1952, New Zealander Anna Paquin labors mightily at her American Southern accent in this new adaptation of **THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING** (USA, Jan. 29, 9-11 p.m.), Carson McCullers' sentimental coming-of-age story set in the South of 1944. But the labor shows and takes its toll on the abilities of the Oscar-winning star of *The Piano* and *Fly Away Home*. As tomboyish 12-year-old Frankie Addams, uncomfortable in her own skin as she prepares for her brother's wedding, Paquin does a prodigious amount of staring and moping; what tethers her to the story is the graceful work of Alfre Woodard (*Passion Fish*) in the Ethel Waters role as the family cook. Woodard is lovely—her moist, expressive eyes speak eloquently—but I can't help thinking she'd be happier with a few more tough-chick *Star Trek*: *First Contact*-type roles that let her take a break from all that weeping. —Lisa Schwarzbaum

DOCUMENTARIES

HBO OFTEN tries to pass off voyeuristic sleaze like the *Real Sex* series as serious documen-

WINNER OF THE WEEK

John Lithgow



The 3rd *Rock From the Sun* star showed no fear of alienating the Golden Globe givers with his hilarious, foreign-press-bashing acceptance speech.

LOSER OF THE WEEK

Bette Midler

Miss M turned in a less-than-divine performance on her HBO special *Diva Las Vegas*, depressingly rehashing the same old material.

ties, so one approaches its sister network Cinemax's **BREASTS: 22 WOMEN ON 41 BREASTS** (Jan. 27, 11-11:50 p.m.) expecting a less-than-uplifting experience. Wrong! Director Meema Spadola smartly ex-

amines all things mammarian, from the silly (discussing different slang names for breasts, one woman confesses, "I like *bazongas*, because it kinda has a conga rhythm to it") to the deadly serious (among the interviewees is an 84-year-old breast-cancer survivor who had a double mastectomy). The women's stories are so fascinating, you almost forget that most of them are topless (now are you interested?). Spadola augments the sound bites with footage of flat-chested flappers, campy TV bra ads, and corny educational puberty films. If nothing else, *Breasts* will teach viewers the meaning of *mastocconcupiscence*: an unnatural obsession with breasts.

CHOICE RERUNS

TBS TRADITIONALLY counterprograms the Super Bowl with eight hours of *The Andy Griffith Show*, but this year it doubles the fun with **SIXTEEN SUPER HOURS OF ANDY** (Jan. 26, 10:05 a.m.-2:05 a.m.). The marathon kicks off with "The Pickle Story," in which Aunt Bee (Frances Bavier) whips up a batch of her famous "kerosene cucumbers." Other highlights include Andy's son, Opie (Ron Howard), standing up to Mayberry's new bully in "One-Punch Opie" (11:05 a.m.); hayseed Gomer Pyle (Jim Nabors) losing his job at his cousin Goober's gas station and shacking up with the Taylor family in "Gomer the House Guest" (2:05 p.m.); town drunk Otis (Hal Smith) terrorizing the streets in "Hot Rod Otis" (3:05 p.m.); and weakling deputy Barney Fife (Don Knotts) bulking up to pass "Barney's Physical" (10:05 p.m.). Warning: Watching all 16 hours may leave you whistling the theme song for weeks.

SOUND BITES

"ANNIE HAS a sister? Ecchh! That's like finding out there was a Chuck Hitler." —Richard (Malcolm Gets), about his nemesis, on *Caroline in the City*

"I'M NOT A club kind of guy. If I want to yell in someone's ear, I'll go visit my grandmother." —Mike (Michael J. Fox) on *Spin City*

"OH, YOU WATCHED it in a hotel room on Spank-o-Vision like the rest of us." —Bill Maher, after conservative Floyd Brown told Elizabeth Berkley he hadn't seen *Showgirls*, on *Politically Incorrect*

"THREE GUYS living in a one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment—oh, to be one of the thousands of flies on that wall." —Kate (Christa Miller), after Drew shacked up with his two buddies, on *The Drew Carey Show*

THE RATINGS

THE 'TRUTH' IS UP THERE

TO NO ONE'S surprise, NBC was able to give *The Naked Truth* (3rd) the top 10 spot ABC never could. While the Peacock touted the Téa Leoni vehicle as its highest premiere in the 18-49 demographic since *A Different World* in 1987, the net neglected to mention that the show lost more than 7 million viewers from its *Seinfeld* lead-in. Fox's animated wonder *King of the Hill* (39th) dropped from the top 20 in its second week but still managed to build on *The Simpsons*' (43rd) audience, while CBS' *Orleans* (85th) lost most of its first-week momentum. CBS' down-to-earth newsmag *Coast to Coast* (59th) premiered in second place in its time slot, but the network lost out on Sunday night; viewers chose to hang out with the glamorazzi at the Golden Globes (11th) on NBC rather than with Bill, Hillary, and Kenny G at the Presidential Inaugural Gala (57th). Who'da thunk it?



TEA'S BREWING: Leoni (l.) gets *Naked* with Holland Taylor

VIEWERS' TOP 30

		VIEWERS*	LAST WEEK
1	37.3	SEINFELD NBC, Thursday, 9 p.m.	1
2	35.9	ER NBC, Thursday, 10 p.m.	—
3	29.9	THE NAKED TRUTH NBC, Thursday, 9:30 p.m.	—
4	29.6	FRIENDS NBC, Thursday, 8 p.m.	2
5	26.9	THE SINGLE GUY NBC, Thursday, 8:30 p.m.	4
6	23.2	HOME IMPROVEMENT ABC, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	7
7	21.3	TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL CBS, Sunday, 8 p.m.	5
8	20.6	60 MINUTES CBS, Sunday, 7 p.m.	6
9	20.3	WALKER, TEXAS RANGER CBS, Saturday, 10 p.m.	14
10	20.2	20/20 ABC, Friday, 10 p.m.	10
11	19.9	GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS NBC, Sunday, 8 p.m.	—
12	19.6	NYPD BLUE ABC, Tuesday, 10 p.m.	25
13	18.8	ROSEANNE ABC, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	23
14	18.5	DATeline NBC NBC, Friday, 9 p.m.	22
15	18.4	THE DREW CAREY SHOW ABC, Wednesday, 9 p.m.	21
16	18.1	FRASIER NBC, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	18
17	18.1	PRIMETIME LIVE ABC, Wednesday, 10 p.m.	13
18	18.1	SPIN CITY ABC, Tuesday, 9:30 p.m.	19
19	17.4	ELLEN ABC, Wednesday, 9:30 p.m.	29
20	17.3	CAROLINE IN THE CITY NBC, Tuesday, 9:30 p.m.	27
21	16.9	DATeline NBC NBC, Tuesday, 10 p.m.	17
22	16.9	FAMILY MATTERS ABC, Friday, 8 p.m.	50
23	16.6	COSBY CBS, Monday, 8 p.m.	32
24	16.5	MURPHY BROWN CBS, Monday, 9 p.m.	41
25	16.5	SABRINA, THE TEENAGE WITCH ABC, Friday, 9 p.m.	31
26	16.2	MOVIE: ALL LIES END IN MURDER ABC, Sunday, 9 p.m.	—
27	16.1	MAD ABOUT YOU NBC, Tuesday, 8 p.m.	32
28	15.9	BOY MEETS WORLD ABC, Friday, 8:30 p.m.	47
29	15.6	CYBILL (R) CBS, Monday, 9:30 p.m.	39
30	15.5	MOVIE: HOME INVASION NBC, Monday, 9 p.m.	—

*IN MILLIONS WEEK OF JAN. 13-19, 1997 (R) RERUN
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THE NEW CLASSICS

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Comic-Strip Relief

If you have to ask who Dilbert is, you don't work in a cubicle. EW looks at why the quirky character is suddenly as popular as the office watercooler. BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM

THE NEW Michael J. Fox sitcom, *Spin City*, about a deputy mayor and his government-office cronies, was one of the few hits of the new fall season, but recently the attractive actress who played Fox's girlfriend left the scene. Carla Gugino found herself out of a job not because she wasn't pleasant, sexy, charming, etc.—but because the show's producers decided that they wanted the show to be more of a workplace sitcom and less a romantic comedy.

That shouldn't come as much of a surprise. Given the inordinate amount of time most of us spend daily in intimate proximity with fellow human beings whose medicine cabinets we don't share, the workplace—whether defined as a proper office, a classroom, or the coffee shop where friends hang out—all but substitutes these days for a family unit, both in private life as well as in popular culture. (One form of proof: Many of today's top TV shows, from *The Drew Carey Show* to *ER* to *NewsRadio*, create families out of colleagues.)

In such an era, is it any wonder that the comic-strip tribulations of a mouthless, bespectacled, mushroom-headed drone who, with his coworkers, toils away in anonymous cubicles at the whim of a pointy-haired management-dummy boss have become so hugely popular? In *Dilbert*, syndicated in 1,400 newspapers in 35 countries, 39-year-old cartoonist Scott Adams, who famously drugged in a cubicle himself at the Northern California headquarters of Pacific Bell for many years, writes about what he knows: the idiocy of bosses, the tyranny of coworkers, and the tiny daily stupidities of office life. Encouraged by a huge response from office workers around the country, Adams gathered a bunch of his observa-



tions about useless meetings, low employee morale, and the like, wrote a witty text to frame his strips, and came forth last year with **THE DILBERT PRINCIPLE: A CUBICLE'S-EYE VIEW OF BOSSES, MEETINGS, MANAGEMENT FADS & OTHER WORKPLACE AFFLICTIONS** (HarperBusiness, \$22),

which rose to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list and has remained in the top 10 for 37 weeks. Then he rustled up some more management tips—ostensibly recounted by Dilbert's scheming canine companion—to make **DOGBERT'S TOP SECRET MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK** (Harper-

ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP BROOKER

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY 51

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BIG DEALS

◆ **JENNY MCCARTHY** will join fellow Playmate Pamela Anderson Lee in the literary arena. The former host of MTV's *Singled Out* has signed with HarperCollins imprint ReganBooks (which sent Howard Stern and Christopher Darden to bestsellerdom) for just over a million dollars, to pen what one flack hesitantly termed "a humorous diary of her daily life." The deal was packaged by McCarthy's manager and boyfriend, Ray Manzella; a release date has not yet been determined.



THE MCCARTHY ERA: Jenny gets penned

◆ **RANDOM HOUSE**, which published Lawrence Schiller's *American Tragedy*, is talking to the O.J.-trial junkie about a repeat engagement. Schiller, who collaborated on Simpson's *I Want to Tell You* (Little, Brown), wants to write about children's beauty pageants—the subject of much scrutiny since the murder of a Little Miss Colorado, JonBenét Ramsey.

Business, \$16). And once again Adams struck gold. A third book, *The Dilbert Future*, is due out in May. Fox Broadcasting is working on developing a live-action Dilbert TV show. Additional books, calendars, and spin-off tchotchkes are also under way. (HarperBusiness will publish four more hardcover books in the next five years, and Andrews & McMeel hopes to roll out calendars and softcover collections of strips for the next seven.) And the simply drawn character, with his perpetually curling tie and short-sleeved shirts, has landed on the covers of *Newsweek*, *FORTUNE*, and *TV Guide* in recent weeks.

Is this nebbishy comic-strip hero worth all the adulation? Frankly, yes. In nailing the Kafkaesque world of office existence, with its petty humiliations, meaningless jargon, and spirit-shriveling tedium, Adams captures the lunacy of our little lives just as surely as *Pogo* or *Peanuts* or *Doonesbury* did in their primes. There are echoes of Dave Barry's "idiots prevail" philosophy in Adams' work, and of Cathy Guisewite's *Cathy* comics, too (Dilbert's bizarre superior owes a debt of thanks to Cathy's boss, Mr. Pinkley).

But in sticking to an office setting, Adams gets to dig deeper than his forebears. (Here's a pithy example chosen at random from *The Dilbert Principle*: "Is it likely that your boss is a visionary who

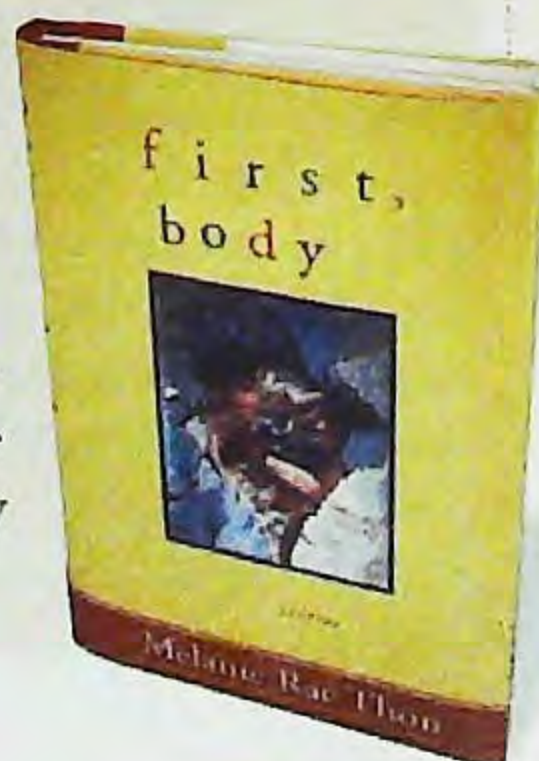
can predict the future even though he can't operate the computer on his desk?... Or is it more likely that the future isn't much brighter than your boss?") Boiling all of human existence down to the relationship between management and workers reduces contemporary life to its psychological essence. "This isn't the 'me' generation of the eighties," Dilbert's boss warns an overworked, outspoken underling in one comic strip included in *Dogbert's*. "This is the 'lifeless nineties.'" With Adams around, we can remember to smell the roses every once in a while—or at least implement a feasibility study about the concept. *The Dilbert Principle: A Dogbert's Top Secret Management Handbook: A-*

THE BROWSER

Opening lines from recently published books

◆ "Red Head got his name and visionary capacity at age nine when he ran behind an uncle chopping wood and caught the back of the axe on his forehead." From **DEAR FUTURE**, by Fred D'Aguiar (*Pantheon*, \$22)

◆ "Two nurses with scissors could make a man naked in eleven seconds. Sid Elliott had been working Emergency eight months and it amazed him every time. Slicing through denim and leather, they peeled men open faster than Sid's father flayed rabbits." From **FIRST, BODY**, by Melanie Rae Thon (*Houghton Mifflin*, \$21.95)



Morris the Cad

Yet another tricky Dick hides 'Behind the Oval Office'

THE MOST fascinating character in Dick Morris' 346-page wonk-fest, **BEHIND THE OVAL OFFICE** (*Random House*, \$25.95), is a woman who's mentioned only a few times. No, it's not "the prostitute," as Morris piously refers to Sherry Rowlands, whose toes he reportedly sucked before their affair became public, forcing him to resign his job as President Clinton's chief political strategist.

Rather it is Eileen McGann, his long-suffering wife of 20 years, who announced her decision to end her marriage to Morris just a week before this book's publication. McGann's move to dump Morris was the first sign that she wasn't the maddening doormat she seemed to be when she loyally stood by Morris after the Rowlands scandal, and later, when it was revealed that Morris had fathered a child with an ex-prostitute in Texas.

She surfaces only occasionally in this otherwise turgid and predictable swamp of self-aggrandizing campaign analysis, political theory, and White House power struggles. The book traces Morris' long relationship with Clinton, whom he began working with in 1977 during the President's Arkansas gubernatorial run, but concentrates mostly on how he reshaped the presidency after 1994's disastrous midterm elections and guided Clinton to a second term.

With the exception of McGann, everyone in *Behind the Oval Office* is essentially a corporate toad—bowing and scraping, back-stabbing and fawning, to the gods of politics and power. In 1995, for instance, Bill Clinton agreed grudgingly to taking a camping vacation out West instead of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., where he really wanted to go, because Morris pointed out that hikers and campers made up a big part of the swing vote. Morris himself endured vicious tongue-lashings by the volatile President as if Morris were a hapless TV producer whose fortunes were tied to a temperamental, million-dollar anchorman. As for Hillary Clinton, Morris describes her as "crying her eyes out" over the pounding she took in the press in 1994 for her high profile in the White House.

McGann, strangely enough, seems to be the only person with a backbone, the only one not willing to bend like a political pretzel to accommodate outside whims. She made no secret of her occasional distaste for Clinton.

"Each time he calls and Eileen answers or when they meet at a reception," Morris writes, "he focuses his six feet two inches of oozing charm on her—though usually with little effect." She once refused to accept a phone call from Clinton because she was annoyed at how he treated Morris. When Morris and his wife were ordered by the White House to file financial-disclosure forms, a move orchestrated in December 1995 by Morris' archenemy, Clinton political adviser Harold Ickes, McGann balked at filing hers, and the White House backed off.

At the end, when the *Star* tabloid broke the Rowlands scandal, Morris writes that "[McGann] was furious in private and fiercely loyal in public.... She battled for me like a tigress."

Morris' final chapter involves his emotional post-scandal conversation with the President. He seems desperate to avoid losing touch with Clinton, who assures him, somewhat disingenuously, that Morris will always have access to him. Morris should have worried a lot more about losing McGann. **C** —Dana Kennedy

THE POLITICS OF PUBLISHING

A HARRY SITUATION

LIKE ANY PUBLISHER, Random House chief, Harold Evans, has had his hits and misses: Marlon Brando's autobiography was a \$5 million debacle, but Colin Powell's memoir and the novel *Primary Colors* were enormous successes. Still, paying \$2.5 million for Dick Morris' campaign tome has put Evans on the spot—especially since he secretly cut the deal while Morris was still on the job as President Clinton's chief campaign strategist, seven months before Morris was

brought down by an affair with a prostitute.

Since Morris never fully addresses the scandal, hardly anyone in the book industry thinks that *Behind the Oval Office* will make money. "There's no way in the world that book will earn out," says a rival publisher. Indeed, it would have to sell half a million copies, and that's almost unheard-of for an inside-the-Beltway account. No one will feel sorry for the smug, unrepentant Morris if the book flops. But whether Evans, a former newspaper editor—and husband of *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown—will feel

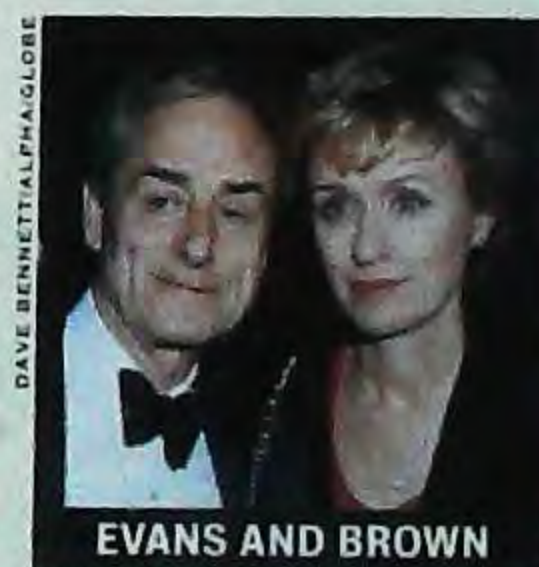


AT ARM'S LENGTH: Morris and now-estranged wife Eileen McGann outside their home last August

the heat from such a major money loser is another story.

The general feeling is that he won't: Money is rarely the deciding factor with Si Newhouse, the press-shy head of the privately held Advance Publications, which owns Random House. "It depends entirely on what Si Newhouse thinks of Harry, not on what the balance sheet says," says the head of a competing house. "And obviously, Si likes Harry." Still, a \$2.5 million advance is something even Random House can ill afford to write off. Evans struggled to get the book out in November—possibly hoping for a sales bounce from the elections—but couldn't do it. "The manuscript was in," says a Random House insider, "but it needed more work. They just couldn't pull it off that fast."

The company still hopes to defeat the naysayers. The first printing of 150,000 copies was followed by a second pressrun of 25,000. And although serial rights in *U.S. News & World Report* and *Newsweek* fell through after copies of the book were leaked to the *New York Daily News* and *The Washington Post*, there have been some foreign sales. But a sampling of bookstores found that *Oval Office* was hardly jumping off the shelves. During its first five days out, only two copies were sold at Politics & Prose, Washington, D.C.'s premier political bookstore, and just seven at Coliseum Books in New York City. "They'll do the best they can until the end of the month," predicts the head of another publishing house. "And then they'll see it was a loser, and it'll be, 'Dick who?'" —Matthew Flamm



EVANS AND BROWN

THE WEEK

NONFICTION

YVES SAINT LAURENT: A BIOGRAPHY Alice Rawsthorn (Doubleday, \$27.50)

A living legend whose success appears to directly correlate to his unhappiness, Yves Saint Laurent stepped up to the fashion plate in 1957, when at 21 he succeeded his mentor, Christian Dior, as chief designer for the fashion house. Over the next two decades, he made fashion history with elegantly practical high fashion. Rawsthorn's enthusiasm for Saint Laurent's professional genius doesn't soften her depiction of this French forerunner, who she says has increasingly distanced himself from the world through money, mood enhancers, and an ill-tempered bulldog named Moujik. From his early 20s, when he was locked up in a mental hospital after a disastrous army stint, Saint Laurent has been emotionally fragile and socially phobic, despite his roster of high-profile friends (Andy Warhol, Bianca Jagger, Catherine Deneuve). Rawsthorn, a *Financial Times* writer, weaves many intimate details into her account, from Saint Laurent's favorite dish (Uncle Ben's rice and vegetables) to his favorite suicide fantasy (a journey to the bottom of the Seine), holding back only on the subject of his current mental state. Her book helps decrypt the life and



ALL ABOUT YVES: Laurent loyalists (clockwise) Princess Stephanie of Monaco, Deneuve, Paloma Picasso, and the late Diana Vreeland

work of a man who is inscrutable, but who has, as one friend put it, "always, always been true to himself." **A-** —Margot Mifflin

LOSING IT: AMERICA'S OBSESSION WITH WEIGHT AND THE INDUSTRY THAT FEEDS ON IT Laura Fraser (Dutton, \$24.95)

The amount of money America spends on diet aids—books, *Lean Cuisine*, weight-loss pills, and so on—could feed a small country for a year. But is it worth it? Does anything work? These, at least, are the

questions Fraser wrestles with in her straightforward, anecdotal, intelligent account of a "journey through Dietland." As a typical "Oh, I'd like to lose 20 pounds" thirtysomething female, Fraser has a history of eating disorders and has attempted practically every get-thin-quick gimmick in the book, so she knows of what she writes. When she visits with Richard Simmons, breakfasts with Susan Powter, and attends classes at Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig,

she does so with an experienced eye; when she analyzes diet pills, she is her own guinea pig. Fraser is also a reporter and takes no theory for granted; for every "expert" she interviews a counterauthority, presenting the evidence for both cases as clearly as possible. The evidence is fairly damning and leads inexorably to her conclusion: Diets don't work. It's time to learn to love the body you were born with and to "eat your vegetables and go outside and play." None of this is terribly new, but the sheer breadth of Fraser's research renders her final arguments a lot more convincing. Like broccoli and bananas, they have a certain natural integrity. **A-** —Vanessa V. Friedman

THE MOTEL IN AMERICA John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers (Johns Hopkins University Press, \$32.95)

Lolita was debauched in one; Kentucky Fried Chicken was born in another. Lots of interesting things happen behind the impervious, often cheesy facade of roadside motels, with their "lumpy mattresses and broken ice machines/... those tiny bars of soap/grimy towels, empty pools, paper-thin walls/and forgotten wake-up calls." But that odd little haiku of a dedication notwithstanding, this book—part of a series on "The Road and American Culture"—isn't about poetry. This is a pretty dense annal, written by two geographers and a historian, and consequently stuffed with maps, facts, and figures about the motel's changing floor plans, its artful euphemisms ("inn," "court," "cottage"), and its predictable transition from mom-and-pop operation to corporate room-packaging industry. But the authors' love of the American landscape is a big neon sign blinking through the statistics; they've compiled a masterful scrapbook for fellow devotees. **A-** —Alexandra Jacobs

WINNER OF THE WEEK

Joan Collins

Random House is dropping all appeals in its suit to recover a \$1.2 million advance from the actress-turned-author, who was recently named an Officer of the British Empire. Legal wrangling is such a royal pain.



FICTION

JANE AND THE MAN OF THE CLOTH Stephanie Barron (Bantam, \$21.95)

The Jane Austen phenomenon continues apace with yet another attempt to milk the craze for her old-fashioned Britishness. The basest effort yet, it features Ms. Austen herself as its intrepid heroine and,

of all things, a sleuth. A mystery of no particular import forms the centerpiece of the plot: The Austen family finds itself in Lyme on holiday, and while they politely socialize, one murder, then another, occurs in town. Not surprisingly, the surly landowner Mr. Sidmouth is blamed for them, and Jane takes it on herself to find the truth. She also gets to be "tart" and experience a "sinking of the heart" and other such cringe-worthy emotions. On first glance you might think the whole book was a kind of postmodern attempt at irony, but by the second chapter you'd realize you were wrong. This is the second in Barron's Jane Austen mystery series, from which any good sleuth would deduce—with horror—that there are more to come. Unless, of course, the daring author becomes interested in Emily Brontë... **C-** —VVF

WHAT A BOOK! Tom T. Hall (Longstreet, \$20) In his seventh novel, country singer-songwriter Hall uses a bizarre dual-protagonist, story-within-a-story device, nattering on about the wackiness of his own life while alternately describing the surreal antics of his fictional hero, Bubba Hernandez. A cross between a memoir and a parable, the book never works. Yet throughout, Hall displays the same talent for crazy-quilt satire that shows up in his classic songs, going after everything from TV news to thieving preachers to romance novels. Unfortunately, these comical asides ("When [Johnny Cash] goes to his house in Jamaica... he takes lots and lots of neat clothes to give away. Half the men in Montego Bay are dressed in black") are far more interesting than his zany but incomprehensible plot. What a missed opportunity! **C+** —Alanna Nash

PAPERBACKS

◆ **SPIKE, MIKE, SLACKERS & DYKES** John Pierson (Hyperion, \$12.95, first published in 1996) A recent history of the American art-film biz by a producer's rep, whose specialty is seeking out talent, funding filmmakers, then brokering distributor deals. Pierson knows *everybody* and uses this memoir for insiderish score settling. A wild-ride inventory of the nuts, bolts, and screwings of the indie-film scene. **A**

◆ **AIN'T GONNA BE THE SAME FOOL TWICE** April Sinclair (Avon, \$12, 1996) In this sequel to *Coffee Will Make You Black*, Chicago-raised heroine Stevie goes to San Francisco, where she wavers about her sexuality, finally allowing herself to choose lovers based on personality, not gender. Sinclair's affection for her feisty ingenue enlivens every page. **A-**



BEST-SELLERS

'SIN'-FULLY GOOD

ALL OF A SUDDEN, success has crept up on suspense writer Tami Hoag. "She certainly has to get one of the 'coming on strongest and fastest' awards," says Bantam president and publisher Irwyn Applebaum, who touts the ex-romance novelist as one of his company's most valuable assets. Hoag's first thriller, *Night Sins*, will air on CBS in February as a four-hour miniseries (starring Valerie Bertinelli as police investigator Megan O'Malley). Its sequel, *Guilty as Sin*, visited the presses 10 times in hardcover and is already in its fourth printing as a paperback. The books have a formidable total of 2.5 million copies in print—a number due to increase with the author's March release, *A Thin Dark Line*. Still, the temptation to call her fans Hoagies is irresistible.



FICTION

- | | | WEEKS ON LIST |
|----|---|---------------|
| 1 | AIRFRAME Michael Crichton, Knopf, \$26..... | 5 |
| 2 | THE CLINIC Jonathan Kellerman, Bantam, \$24.95..... | 2 |
| 3 | DRUMS OF AUTUMN Diana Gabaldon, Delacorte, \$24.95..... | 2 |
| 4 | THE DEEP END OF THE OCEAN Jacquelyn Mitchard, Viking, \$23.95..... | 18 |
| 5 | SILENT WITNESS Richard North Patterson, Knopf, \$25.95..... | 1 |
| 6 | THE NOTEBOOK Nicholas Sparks, Warner, \$16.95..... | 13 |
| 7 | THE FALLEN MAN Tony Hillerman, HarperCollins, \$24..... | 7 |
| 8 | THE LAWS OF OUR FATHERS Scott Turow, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$26.95..... | 12 |
| 9 | EXECUTIVE ORDERS Tom Clancy, Putnam, \$27.95..... | 21 |
| 10 | THE UNLIKELY SPY Daniel Silva, Villard, \$25..... | 1 |

NONFICTION

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 1 | A REPORTER'S LIFE Walter Cronkite, Knopf, \$26.95..... | 5 |
| 2 | ANGELA'S ASHES Frank McCourt, Scribner, \$24..... | 17 |
| 3 | MAKE THE CONNECTION Bob Greene and Oprah Winfrey, Hyperion, \$18.95..... | 17 |
| 4 | MASTERING THE ZONE Barry Sears, Ph.D., ReganBooks, \$25..... | 2 |
| 5 | MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS John Gray, HarperCollins, \$23..... | 196 |
| 6 | SIMPLE ABUNDANCE Sarah Ban Breathnach, Warner, \$17.95..... | 42 |
| 7 | THE ZONE Barry Sears, Ph.D., with Bill Lawren, ReganBooks, \$24..... | 43 |
| 8 | MY SERGEI: A LOVE STORY Ekaterina Gordeeva, with E.M. Swift, Warner, \$18.95..... | 11 |
| 9 | LIVING FAITH Jimmy Carter, Times Books, \$23..... | 4 |
| 10 | DOGBERT'S TOP SECRET MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK Scott Adams, HarperBusiness, \$16..... | 12 |

MASS-MARKET PAPERBACKS

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | THE RULES: TIME-TESTED SECRETS TO CAPTURING THE HEART OF MR. RIGHT Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider, Warner, \$5.99..... | 14 |
| 2 | THE HORSE WHISPERER Nicholas Evans, Dell, \$7.50..... | 14 |
| 3 | FIVE DAYS IN PARIS Danielle Steel, Dell, \$6.50..... | 2 |
| 4 | THE FINAL JUDGMENT Richard North Patterson, Ballantine, \$6.99..... | 5 |
| 5 | DR. ATKINS' NEW DIET REVOLUTION Robert C. Atkins, M.D., Avon, \$6.50..... | 2 |
| 6 | GUILTY AS SIN Tami Hoag, Bantam, \$6.50..... | 1 |
| 7 | THE HUNDRED SECRET SENSES Amy Tan, Ivy, \$6.99..... | 9 |
| 8 | THE CRY OF THE HALIDON Robert Ludlum, Bantam, \$7.50..... | 9 |
| 9 | ABSOLUTE POWER David Baldacci, Warner, \$7.50..... | 13 |
| 10 | THE LOST WORLD Michael Crichton, Ballantine, \$7.99..... | 18 |

SOURCE: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

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Techno Logical

U2's long-awaited new single and video—along with Prodigy's MTV hit, "Firestarter"—may finally make America rave about the U.K.'s electronic scene. BY DAVID BROWNE

WILL 1997 become the year of techno? Will this whooshing electronic dance music—and its various offshoots and sister genres, like trip-hop, jungle, drum-and-bass, and ambient—finally turn America into one coast-to-coast rave? For years, techno advocates have been predicting such a breakthrough, while forgetting that the American public needs something accessible—an image, a hook, anything—to attach to these notoriously inhuman beats. Judging by two new singles and their accompanying videos, we may finally be getting that missing ingredient: Some familiar faces, and an eye-grab-

bing new one, are preparing to take the electro-beat subculture to the masses. The old pals are U2, who preview their reportedly electronic-steeped album *Pop* with the single and video "DISCOTHÈQUE" (Island). (Although MTV premiered the clip Jan. 8, the single itself won't be in stores until Feb. 4.) Sonic leaps are nothing new for U2: *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa*, as well as a 1995 fan-club-only remix CD, delved into distortion and rhythmic throb, gen-

tly nudging the band and its fans into new audio playgrounds. "Discothèque" pumps up the volume, not to mention the chaos and density. Previous noise-pop experiments like *Achtung Baby*'s "The Fly" seem quaint and thin compared with the doorbell-buzzer guitar and aggressive, electric-kazoos squeal that drive "Discothèque." Bono and The Edge demonstrate that they can write lyrics as oblique as in any alt-rock tune, and the song's tribal stomp is a tip of the sock hat to British knob twiddlers like the Chemical Brothers and Aphex Twin (check out their "Three Little Birdies Down Beats" and "Digeridoo," respectively). Does that make U2 innovators

FLINT CONDITION: "Firestarter" finds Prodigy's frontman in peak freak form



or bandwagon jumpers? We'll need to hear the full *Pop* album to decide.

Despite the sonic layers, U2 can't help being human—and thus a little tentative. For all its undeniable groove and adventurousness, "Discothèque" doesn't quite go far enough. Beneath the din, U2 still act very much like an oldfangled rock band. The new electronic music isn't about guitar solos or real, human-propelled drums, both of which can be heard throughout "Discothèque." In fact, the single seems less about technology than it is about U2's ongoing quest to loosen up. Consider the song's deliciously garish video, cleverly set inside a disco glitter ball. Bumping, grinding, hip-thrusting, Travolta-stepping, and playing dress-up (as the Village People, no less), the band continues to deflate its own self-importance. (Memo to Live and other bastard U2 stepchildren: *Study this video.*) It's the end of the rock world as U2 know it, and they seem to feel pretty fine about it.

It's easy to hear why British technocrats Prodigy are finally turning heads in the U.S., after years of U.K. hits, with "FIRESTARTER" (Mute). The record incorporates all the standard techno elements—the stop-start, wood-meets-sandpaper rhythm; the space-warp oscillation; the general feel of factory machinery throwing a party for itself. What transports the song beyond mere computer blips and into terrific pop is a belching blast of distorted guitar (sampled from the Breeders' instrumental "S.O.S.") and the punk-cockney sneer of singer Keith Flint.

As for the "Firestarter" video: Talk about giving techno a face. With his demented grin, horn-shaped sprouts of hair, and overdose of mascara, the stocky Flint is a human freak show—a clown at a cyberculture circus. Shot in black and white, the clip looks like *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* applied to the saga of A Flock of Seagulls. With "Firestarter," which recently helped them land a deal on Madonna's Maverick label, Prodigy have given the techno world what it's desperately needed to cross over: a vocal and physical presence. Flint is a creepy presence, for sure—but no one said the future would be pretty, did they? "Discothèque": **B+** "Firestarter": **A**

10 STUPID QUESTIONS

BOONE TO BE WILD

TWELVE YEARS after David Lee Roth strutted his way through the big-band/heavy metal hybrid "Just a Gigolo," clean-cut '50s teen idol Pat Boone is following Diamond Dave's lead. On his new album, *Pat Boone in a Metal Mood: No More Mr. Nice Guy*, the devout Christian swears off his usual MOR material, turning instead to big-band versions of hard-rock classics like Van Halen's "Panama" and Metallica's "Enter Sandman." Will his loungy rendition of "You've Got Another Thing Comin'" propel Judas Priest into the top 10? You never know. This is the man whose sterile cover of "Tutti Frutti" tamed Little Richard for the masses.



EASY RIDER: Pat brings his light touch to heavy metal

- 1. Of the people you cover on *Metal Mood*, whom would you most like to hang out with?** I'd like to spend more time with Alice Cooper ("No More Mr. Nice Guy"). We've actually played golf together.
- 2. You've sold over 45 million records, more than any metal band. Any tips for boosting sales?** Just keep hacking away. That's what I do in golf.
- 3. Which Pat Boone song do you think would most likely convert metalheads?** [Long pause] Um...well, I guess "Speedy Gonzales." Yeah, that might say to somebody, "Hey, he is capable of doing some righteous rock."
- 4. If Jesus were alive today, would he be in a metal band?** [Laughs] Well, He wouldn't be in a band, because He was the leader. He'd start one.
- 5. You made a cameo appearance on *Moonlighting* 10 years ago. Which sitcom would you most like to guest on now?** *3rd Rock From the Sun*. A totally out-there character from some place nobody else has ever been. I'm a descendant of Daniel Boone, and a sense of exploration was one of his great characteristics.
- 6. Okay, so what would Daniel Boone's band sound like?** Raw, untrained, spontaneous, with a woodsy flavor. Like George Jones or Clint Black.
- 7. Having recorded "Panama," what's your take on the Van Halen mess? Do you prefer Sammy or Dave?** David and Eddie are like those little Scottie dogs with magnets that repel each other. But between the two guys as singers, that's a tough question. To me, talentwise it's a coin toss.
- 8. What's next, polka renditions of punk songs?** I've got plenty of great, heavier metal for volume two—songs by Megadeth, Poison, Black Sabbath. But I have a couple of other shocking, unexpected ideas. I don't want to say anything; I'm worried that somebody's gonna beat me to it. I really think Tom Jones, for example, is gonna gnash his teeth that he didn't think of this first when he hears it.
- 9. Did you let your daughter Debby listen to metal when she was a kid?** We did have a real row over Jimi Hendrix. I walked in her room one day and there was a psychedelic poster of him. I got real upset.
- 10. So was she thrilled to hear that you've covered Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary"?** Well, she thinks I'm nuts. —Rob Brunner

THE WEEK

SINGLES

SHANIA TWAIN "God Bless the Child" (Mercury Nashville) Twain sheds her country-cookie image to bemoan the fate of the world's poor children on this gospel-ish power ballad (not to be confused with the Billie Holiday standard). While her sentiments are pretty naive, her pipes sound plenty experienced. With a vocal boost from members of Take 6, Twain whispers and shouts with enough passion to make us temporarily forget her pinup looks. **B** —Bob Cannon

THE BLACKOUT ALLSTARS "I LIKE IT" (Columbia) This swinging number first reared its joyous beat in the 1994 film *I Like It Like That*; now, thanks to its inclusion in a Burger King TV commercial, it's cracked *Billboard's* Hot 100. With its boundless energy, the Latin house anthem (think Tito Puente hosting an all-night rave) had to bust out of the underground eventually. Only a hopeless couch potato could possibly not like it. **B** —Jeremy Helliger

POP/ROCK

APHEX TWIN Richard D. James (Sire) It makes sense that the one-man-band ambient auteur would name his latest album after himself—it's his quirkiest, most personal work. The burbling instrumental squiggle pop James pioneered is here, but tracks like "4" and "Girl/Boy Song" reveal a new warmth and wistfulness, thanks to synthesized string sections that sound radiantly real. If machines could joke or cry, this is how they would sound. **A-** —DB

BUILT TO SPILL Perfect From Now On (Warner Bros.) Built to Spill get a lot of mileage out of going nowhere in particular. Muddling around in a fog of spacey guitar, nasal vocals, and meandering song structures, they seem to stumble onto melodies by accident. But what melodies they are! When the fuzzy guitar lines and pinched vocal whines mysteriously mutate into recognizable songs, the band discovers beauty in its excess. **B+** —RB



HIGH TIMES: Cibo Matto take risky leaps on their Super-fun EP

BRUCE COCKBURN The Charity of Night (Rykodisc) Not since, well, Billy Corgan's last opus has anyone used dusk-to-daylight imagery as expansively as on Cockburn's 23rd album. As a famously spiritual sensualist who feels "at home in the night but

hungry for dawn," this politico-romantic masterfully evokes night as a cloak of comfort and corruption both. And if he throws murderers and land mines into the mix, it makes his juxtaposed joie de vivre more vital. **A-** —Chris Willman

CIBO MATTO Super Relax EP (Warner Bros.) With its extra-funky remixes courtesy of the Beastie Boys and English DJ duo Coldcut, a hyperactive live tune, two tracks performed with a full rock band, and Rolling Stones and Antonio Carlos Jobim covers, this supplement to last year's *Viva! La Woman* album is, to say the least, all over the place. But the super-wacky, sample-happy duo pull it off, letting their art-as-party-music sensibility guide them through nine scattered tracks of serious fun. **B+** —RB

TRANS AM Surrender to the Night (Thrill Jockey) Cross-pollinating electronic and rock music has become increasingly common in the past year—often with mixed results. On album No. 2, this singerless Maryland trio hybridizes better than most, eschewing the Muzak-y conventions that have already taken over trip-hop and replacing them with a blend of Wire-esque jaggedness, arena-rock machismo, and the occasional dance-friendly beat. **B+** —Ethan Smith

JONNY LANG Lie to Me (A&M) The ripe, vibrant voice of contemporary blues singer and guitarist Lang is so compelling, it would be an exceptional major-label debut even if he weren't only 16. Although the pacing isn't as varied as it could be, Lang's choice of strong new songs (the ardent title track and wistful "Missing Your Love," which he cowrote) suggests a savviness beyond his years. **B+** —Chip Deffaa

LEGACY

PARKER HAS LEFT THE BUILDING



TOM'S BOY: Parker, with Presley

WHEN IT came to his relationship with Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis himself may have put it best: "Colonel Parker knows the business and I don't," the young King said in 1957. "He never butts into record sessions, I don't butt into business." Maybe Presley should have. Parker, who died of a stroke at age 87 in Las Vegas Jan. 21, may go down as the most notorious rock manager in history—no small claim. Parker took a whopping 50 percent of Presley's earnings and engineered his client's often baffling career moves. "I had his whole career mapped out from the start—the Rebel, the G.I., the Eunuch, followed by the Raunchy Rhinestone Messiah," Parker said after Presley's death.

Parker's own life was shrouded in mystery. Born in Holland (although he claimed West Virginia roots) and a colonel via an honorary title, Parker was a carny barker and dogcatcher before he elbowed his way into Presley's camp in 1955. After Presley's death in 1977, he moved to Vegas, living off a \$2.2 million settlement from the Presley estate that severed his financial ties with his so-called "greatest discovery." There may never be another Colonel Tom—for which, it could be argued, most rock stars should be grateful. —DB

DUBIOUS ACHIEVEMENT OF THE WEEK



Michael Jackson

Just how popular is the King of Pop? According to a press release trumpeting a recent trip to Hawaii, "One local reporter said the kind of excitement surrounding the pop idol's arrival far surpassed that of former President George Bush." Hardly an aloha of historic proportions.

60 FT DOLLS The Big 3 (DGC) Brimming with melodically visceral nuggets like "Stay," this hook-happy Welsh trio's debut ought to warm the hearts of power-pop-loving louts the world over. These boys flaunt their influences (Beatles, Jam, Who) shamelessly, but so what? With their reckless enthusiasm and intuitive sense of songcraft, 60 Ft Dolls tower over the competition. **A-** —TS

PIGEONHED The Full Sentence (Sub Pop) As a producer, Steve Fisk is a grunge legend, having twiddled knobs for heavyweights like Nirvana. As Pigeonhed, though, Fisk and coconspirator Shawn Smith don't fly the flannel. Instead, the duo serve up a stoned soul picnic, trip-hopping from "It's Like the Man Said" to the title track's stirring falsetto pyrotechnics. The result is a true anomaly—a Seattle funk masterpiece. **A** —Matt Diehl

SOUNDTRACKS

BROADWAY CAST Chicago: The Musical (RCA Victor) Every element of this cast album is right—from Kander and Ebb's razzle-dazzle score to John Frosk's clarion trumpeting to star turns by Bebe Neuwirth ("All That Jazz"), Ann

Reinking ("Nowadays"), and Joel Grey ("Mister Cellophane"). Ralph Burns' arrangements pack so much panache, you almost don't miss seeing the Bob Fosse-style choreography that help make this Broadway's most electrifying show. **A** —CD

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK Everyone Says I Love You (RCA Victor) This keepsake of Woody Allen's musical might sound better in the shower. It's full of non-singing actors awkwardly bursting into peppy tunes from old musicals. That cringe factor, of course, was the idea: Allen felt that untrained pipes would sound more expressive. But once you get an earful of Julia Roberts wobbling her way through "All My Life," or Allen mewing "I'm Thru With Love," the experiment seems ludicrous. It's all bathed in pleasant, string-heavy arrangements, but these vintage ditties mostly slip down the drain. **D+** —Steve Daly

VARIOUS ARTISTS Rhyme & Reason (Priority) R&R reveals that East Coasters like A Tribe Called Quest and West Coasters like Mack 10 are moving musically closer, as the rap's grooves get deeper and smoother. Meanwhile, Memphis' Eightball & MJG and Chicago's Crucial Conflict add a truly national flavor. More than a hodgepodge of singles, *Rhyme* sounds surprisingly cohesive. **B+** —James Bernard

REISSUES

LEFTY FRIZZELL Look What Thoughts Will Do (Columbia Legacy) Like Hank Williams—that other pillar of modern C&W—the woefully underrecognized Frizzell was eventually marginalized by rock & roll and came to a dissipated, premature end. This two-CD set gives Frizzell, with his chart-whomping honky-tonk, his due by unearthing the alternately heartrending and happy-go-lucky oeuvre of his early-'50s zenith. **A** —Mike Flaherty

JAZZ

KEN PEPOWSKI The Other Portrait (Concord) If the "young lion" saxophonists are getting the headlines and the money, what's left for a gifted but not quite so young clarinet player like Peplowski? There's time—to create remarkable CDs like *The Other Portrait*, which may well be too idiosyncratically beautiful for the jazz establishment. Eclectic material (including Witold Lutoslawski's *Dance Preludes*) sensitively performed (with the Bulgarian National Symphony, no less), this is music that averts the jazz zeitgeist by transcending it. **A** —David Hajdu

THE CHARTS

'SPACE' INVADER

THE MOVIE MAY be a widely acknowledged box office disappointment, but *Space Jam* the album isn't committing any fouls in record stores. Thanks to two top 20 hits (R. Kelly's ballad "I Believe I Can Fly" and Seal's remake of the Steve Miller Band's "Fly Like an Eagle"), the R&B-gearred soundtrack rebounds into the top 5 this week. With *Evita* making a dramatic leap from seventh to second place (as two other soundtracks, *Romeo + Juliet* and *The Preacher's Wife*, hold steady in the top 10), the members of No Doubt must—undoubtedly—be nervous about retaining their No. 1 spot.



WEEK	POP ALBUMS	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1 NO DOUBT <i>Tragic Kingdom</i> , Trauma/Interscope	55
2	7 SOUNDTRACK <i>Evita</i> , Warner Bros.	10
3	2 SOUNDTRACK <i>Romeo + Juliet</i> , Capitol	12
4	3 CELINE DION <i>Falling Into You</i> , 550 Music/Epic	45
5	8 SOUNDTRACK <i>Space Jam</i> , Warner Sunset/Atlantic	10
6	5 TONI BRAXTON <i>Secrets</i> , LaFace/Arista	31
7	6 SOUNDTRACK <i>The Preacher's Wife</i> , Arista	8
8	4 LEANN RIMES <i>Blue</i> , Curb	28
9	11 MAKAVELI <i>The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory</i> , Death Row/Interscope	11
10	9 BUSH <i>Razorblade Suitcase</i> , Trauma/Interscope	9

COUNTRY ALBUMS

1	1 LEANN RIMES <i>Blue</i> , Curb	28
2	2 DEANA CARTER <i>Did I Shave My Legs for This?</i> , Capitol Nashville	20
3	3 ALAN JACKSON <i>Everything I Love</i> , Arista	12
4	4 CLINT BLACK <i>The Greatest Hits</i> , RCA	17
5	8 KEVIN SHARP <i>Measure of a Man</i> , Asylum	14
6	5 REBA MCENTIRE <i>What If It's You</i> , MCA	11
7	6 SHANIA TWAIN <i>The Woman in Me</i> , Mercury Nashville	102
8	9 MINDY MCCREARY <i>Ten Thousand Angels</i> , BNA	38
9	7 BROOKS & DUNN <i>Borderline</i> , Arista	40
10	11 GEORGE STRAIT <i>Blue Clear Sky</i> , MCA	39

COLLEGE ALBUMS

1	1 TRICKY <i>Pre-Millennium Tension</i> , Island	9
2	3 DJ SHADOW <i>Endtroducing...</i> , Mo Wax/frr/London	9
3	5 JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION <i>Now I Got Worry</i> , Matador/Capitol	14
4	2 JOHNNY CASH <i>Unchained</i> , American	11
5	4 WILCO <i>Being There</i> , Reprise	12
6	10 GUIDED BY VOICES <i>Sunfish Holy Breakfast (EP)</i> , Matador	8
7	6 LUSCIOUS JACKSON <i>Fever In Fever Out</i> , Grand Royal/Capitol	16
8	11 CHAVEZ <i>Ride the Fader</i> , Matador	8
9	14 TANYA DONELLY <i>Sliding and Diving (EP)</i> , 4AD	13
10	142 RED KRAYOLA <i>Hazel</i> , Drag City	2

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Channel Surfing

Technophobes, rejoice: WebTV brings Internet access to television screens. But with limited capabilities, it's not going to replace personal computers any time soon. **BY BOB STRAUSS**

IF THERE'S one reason the World Wide Web hasn't exploded as fast as industry insiders once predicted, it's that many ordinary folks are intimidated by the high-tech, user-unfriendly PCs that have heretofore been necessary to jack into cyberspace. That could change, though, with the introduction of the much-lauded (by consumer electronics companies) and much-derided (by traditional PC powerhouses) "Internet set-top box," a cheap, compact piece of hardware that enables the aver-

age technophobe to access the Web via his or her TV set. To see about this technology for myself, I spent some time using one doohickey, Philips Magnavox's **WEBTV** (\$329); Sony has a similar model out for \$330. A day-by-day account:

◆ **Thursday morning.** My WebTV arrives. Smaller and sleeker than a VCR, it comes with a funky remote control and a wireless keyboard (an optional, but indispensable, accessory that costs an additional \$69). Installation is a cinch: I plug the box's audio and video cables into my

TV and attach a phone line to the back of the unit. As soon as I switch it on, the box dials up the WebTV home page, which unfolds with glorious crispness on my 27-inch TV. Then it's simply a matter of registering with the WebTV Network, which costs \$20 per month and entitles me to five separate E-mail accounts.

◆ **Thursday afternoon.** The WebTV browser, I quickly learn, is based on a different principle than that of, say, Netscape. To navigate, I press arrow buttons on the remote or on the wireless keyboard, a labor-intensive experience

that's considerably clunkier than using a mouse. I notice, also, that the WebTV home page, though comprehensive (including links to hundreds of entertainment-related sites), may be a bit limiting to those unaware of the enormous breadth of the Internet. Newbies might linger there for weeks before realizing that by pressing the appropriate keyboard buttons, they can bypass the page entirely and jump into untrammelled cyberspace. Oh, yeah—since for now the Internet is essentially a silent medium, WebTV tries to liven things up by broadcasting a steady stream of elevator music. I turn it off in about seven minutes.

◆ **Friday evening.** To prepare for tonight's broadcast of *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, I fire up WebTV and visit some fan pages devoted to star Melissa Joan Hart. I'm impressed by how clearly and quickly the images of Hart scroll onto my TV screen; then it occurs to me that because WebTV doesn't include a hard drive, I can't save any of them (though sites can be bookmarked). Another bad sign: When I attempt to download a video clip of the show from the official ABC site, a routine enough transaction on the PC, a message informs me that "the item chosen contains a kind of information that WebTV can't use." The silence is becoming deafening; it seems unnatural to be using my TV without any auditory content. I reactivate the elevator music. Three minutes later, I turn it off again.

◆ **Saturday morning.** I'm in the mood to go out and see a flick, so I browse through the movie links on the WebTV home page to see what's out there. Big problem: Not only am I unable to download any video clips from these studio-sponsored sites, but there's no way to access Shockwave, which adds much-needed interactive tomfoolery—like the hostage-negotiation game on the *Metro* website—to the silent inertia of the Web. (A WebTV spokesman says the unit's limited memory can't handle such megabyte-intensive applications.) *Scream*'s site doesn't, and *The People vs. Larry Flynt* is completely impenetrable—the site is designed to be navigated with a mouse. I'm reminded of what a fellow critic once wrote about Philips' CD-i game player: Using it was like flip-

ping through an encyclopedia whose pages were all stuck together.

◆ **Sunday afternoon.** Utilizing the picture-in-picture feature of my TV set, I watch the first quarter of the Panthers-Packers play-off game and at the same time access the Fox Sports website. This is, I think, WebTV's most promising application, but the demand simply doesn't exist yet for Fox to provide real-time ancillary content on the Internet; I learn just as much by watching the pre-

game show, listening to John Madden's fevered commentary, and studying the stats that routinely pop up, all on the live broadcast.

◆ **Monday morning.** I pack up the WebTV and ship it back whence it came. If you've never owned a computer, and you're looking for a cheap way to get onto the Net, I grade it as a solid **B**. But in its current form, for anyone who's ever spent a lost weekend staring into a PC screen, it's a **C-**.

CYBERTALK

EBONICS GETS SPIKED

"I'M A HUGE PRIMUS fan and so, as you can imagine if you've ever been to a Primus show, I was more than shocked when I heard the *Pee-wee* theme playing before they came out. To see people moshing to that absurd bit of music brought tears to my eyes. Not exactly what I expected when I wrote it." —Film and TV composer **Danny Elfman** on America Online

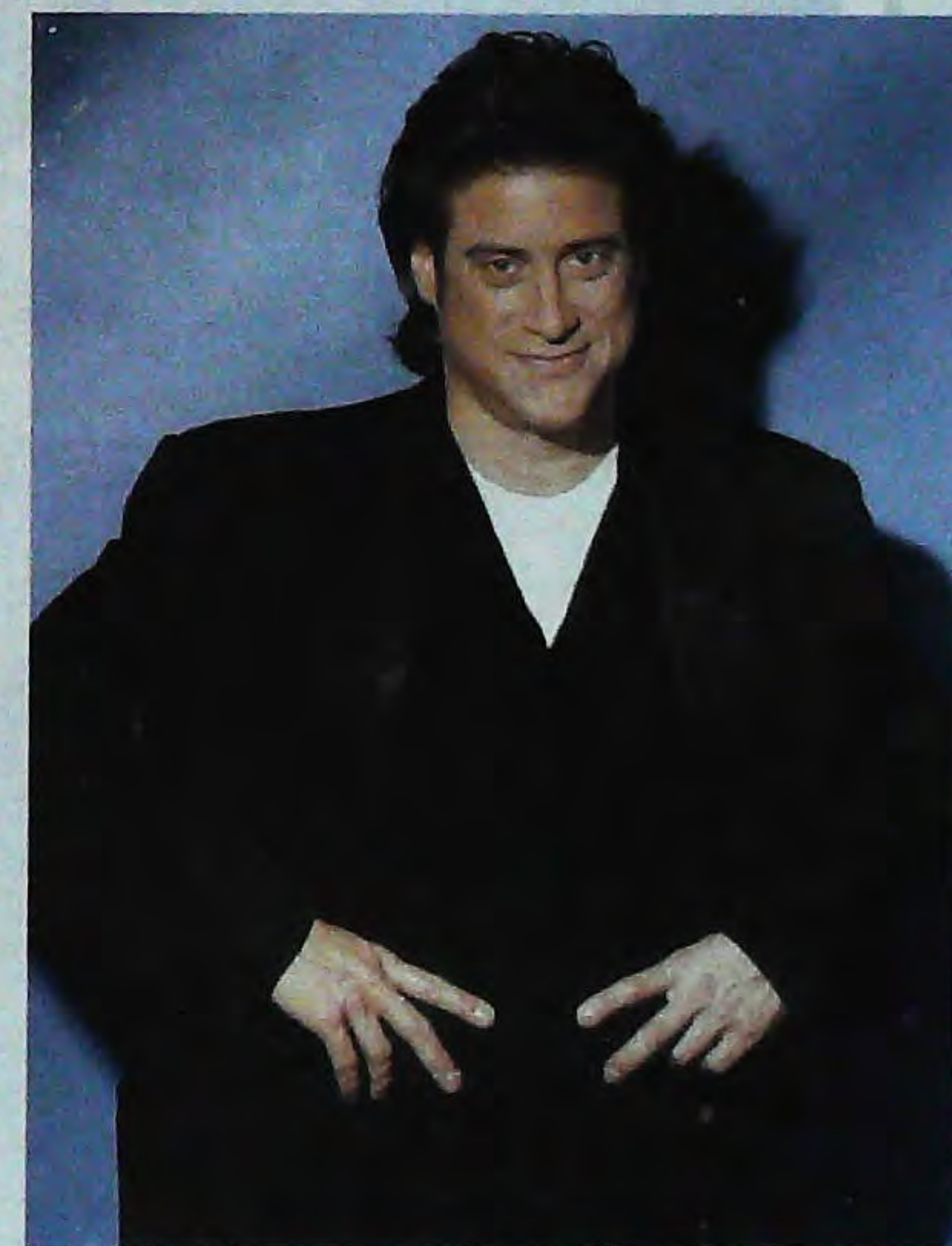
"I BE thinking that Ebonics be stupid." —**Spike Lee** on Prodigy

"I DON'T know why I'm neurotic, but I'm happier than most people think. Please tell your kids I was the prince, not the king [in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*].... Unfortunately, [because of] the tights I wore, my internist thinks my sperm is too flat to fertilize an egg. I'm really depressed about it." —**Richard Lewis** on Prodigy

"I'M LOOKING for backing for an unauthorized autobiography that I'm writing. Hopefully, this will sell in such huge numbers that I'll be able to sue myself for an extraordinary amount of money and finance the film version in which I will play everybody." —**David Bowie** on AOL

"NOBODY DOES MY HAIR. I get out of the shower and I just towel-dry it, and hopefully it falls in the right spot. If it does not, I have a bad hair day.... The trick is not to wash it. My sister [Justine] taught me that." —*Chicago Sons'* **Jason Bateman** on AOL

"THE KEY TO LANDING a role on *Baywatch* is having big white teeth." —**Traci Bingham** on Prodigy

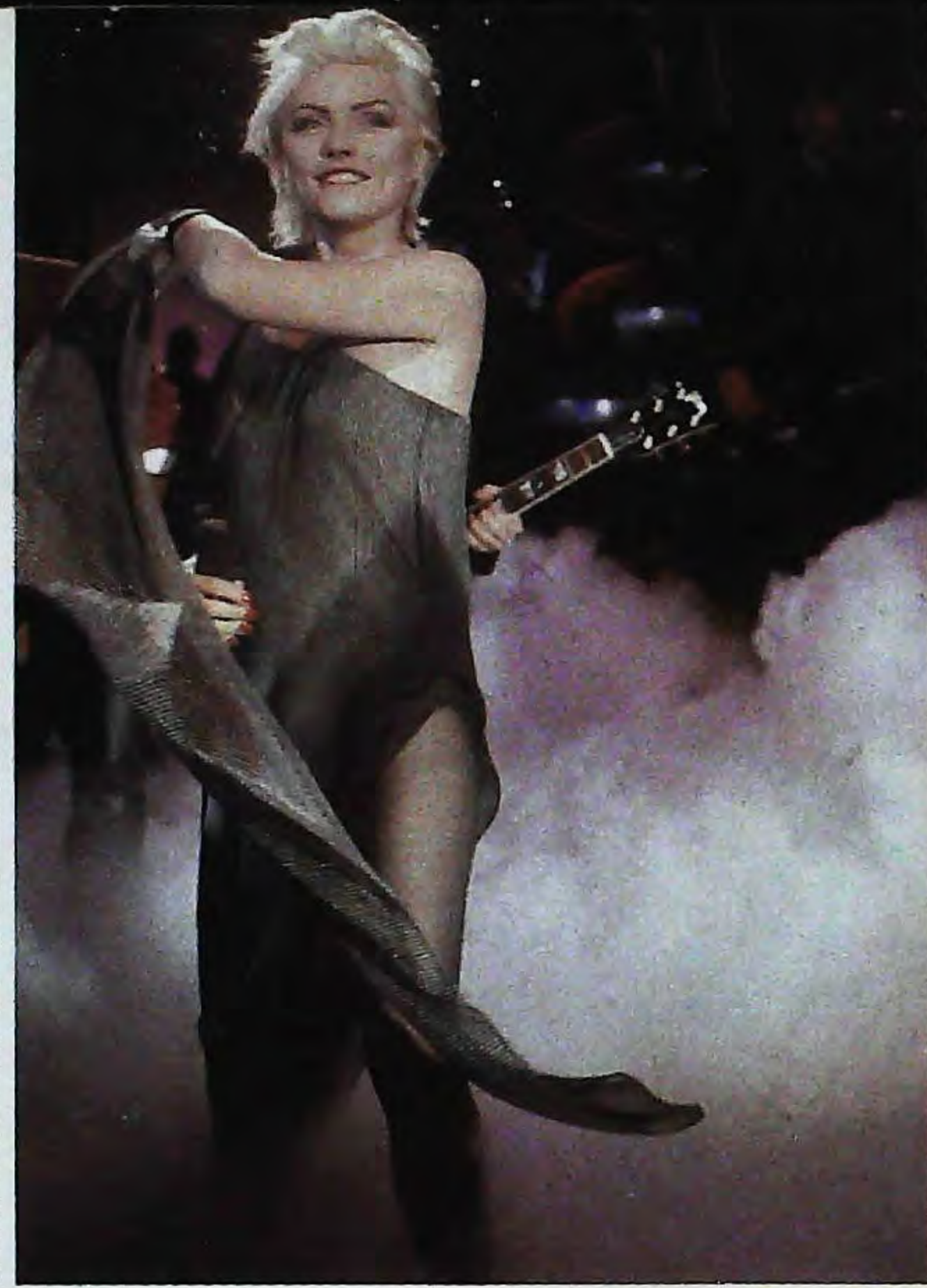


PRINCE OF TIGHTS: Lewis lands in a squeeze play

THE WEEK

MUSIC

THE ULTIMATE VIDEO JUKEBOX VOLUMES 1 & 2 (OmniMedia, CD-ROM for PC, \$29.95) Video may have killed the radio star, but CD-ROM is no health spa for rock videos either. Because of the format's coarse picture quality and limited storage capacity, a CD-ROM compilation of old MTV clips offers all the shoddy convenience of an eight-track tape. While *The Ultimate Video Jukebox*—a pair of British-assembled discs, each containing 10 full-length numbers plus an interactive pop quiz—does offer handy access and programming controls, digital sound, and a link to a mildly informative website, the arbitrary selection of new-wave oldies (by Blondie, Joy Division, Eurythmics, Ultravox, and others) and



UP IN SMOKE: Jukebox revisits Debbie Harry and Blondie's roots

more recent dance tunes (by the likes of Barry White, Mica Paris, New Order, and R. Kelly) is far from ultimate. **C+** —Ira Robbins

ENHANCED CDS

JAZZ CENTRAL STATION: GLOBAL JAZZ POLL WINNERS VOL. 1 and **GERRY MULLIGAN: LEGACY** (N2K Encoded Jazz, for PC and Mac, \$16.98 each) Unlike rock, jazz is not a particularly visual medium. How many Ornette Coleman fans, say, make a habit of watching their music on the tube? Taking a tiny step on screen, these two discs inaugurate an enhanced-CD label that also promotes, via bundled software, an ambitious and attractive website for jazz lovers (www.jazzcentralstation.com). The hitch is, you can't look and listen at the same time. On the fusion-sodden *Jazz Poll*, outside of bite-size clips of three artists' remarks, you have to endure a bland theme song while viewing poll results, photos, essays, and recording credits. Pop the disc into a standard CD player, however, and you can read similar info in the booklet while enjoying the music of Miles Davis, Cassandra Wilson, and others. Enhancements to *Legacy*, a cursory career retrospective of Gerry Mulligan, are equally flat: a sketchy biography, scraps of archival film and peer tributes, a condolence note from Bill Clinton, and a poem the late baritone sax great wrote to his mother. *Jazz Central Station: Global Jazz Poll Winners Vol. 1*. **C** Gerry Mulligan: *Legacy*. **C+** —IR

GAMES

LEONARD NIMOY'S PRIMORTALS: INTERACTIVE COMIC BOOK AND REFERENCE GUIDE (Sierra On-Line/Big Entertainment, CD-ROM for PC and Mac, \$19.95) **THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN AND ROBIN ACTIVITY CENTER** (Gryphon, CD-ROM for PC and Mac, \$49) Based on Leonard Nimoy and the late Isaac Asimov's comic books about humanity's "first contact" with aliens who descended from dinosaurs, *Primortals* cranks up gorgeous 2-D artwork with cushy multimedia embellishments: Graphic frames cohere in a fluid, animated slide show accompanied by a groovy techno-pop soundtrack; the narrative unfolds from four character perspectives (human and alien); and the hyperlinked "Telmo" arena divulges strange stats on the real-life SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). Where *Primortals* appeals to the imaginative kid in everyone, *Batman and Robin*, based on the current TV cartoon series, talks down—even to children. Tykes collect crime-solving clues by exploring a piddling three screens (Batcave, Wayne Manor, Gotham City), playing mind-numbing games (crack a code by doing, ugh, lots of multiplication), and withstanding Robin's grating, gung-ho narration. *Primortals*: **A-** *Batman and Robin*: **C** —Megan Harlan

ONLINE EVENTS

Scheduled for the week of Jan. 27–Feb. 9. All listings are Eastern standard and are subject to change.

1 / 2 8

◆ **THE GUFs, MATCHBOX 20, AND MUZE** (www.atlantic-records.com, 8 p.m.) Broadcast of Jan. 21 alt-rock triple-header from New York City's Mercury Lounge.

◆ **CRAIG FERGUSON** (*Prodigy*, *Jump: Chat*, 11 p.m.) *Drew Carey Show* costar discusses the series' second season.

1 / 3 1

◆ **STAR WARS SPECIAL EDITION** (www.roughcut.com) Online movie mag *Roughcut* celebrates the trilogy's rerelease with a 3-D issue featuring interviews and special effects.

2 / 3

◆ **ERIC BENET** (AOL, Keyword: Warner, 9:30 p.m.) NAACP Image Awards nominee for Outstanding New Artist previews his new R&B album, *True to Myself*.



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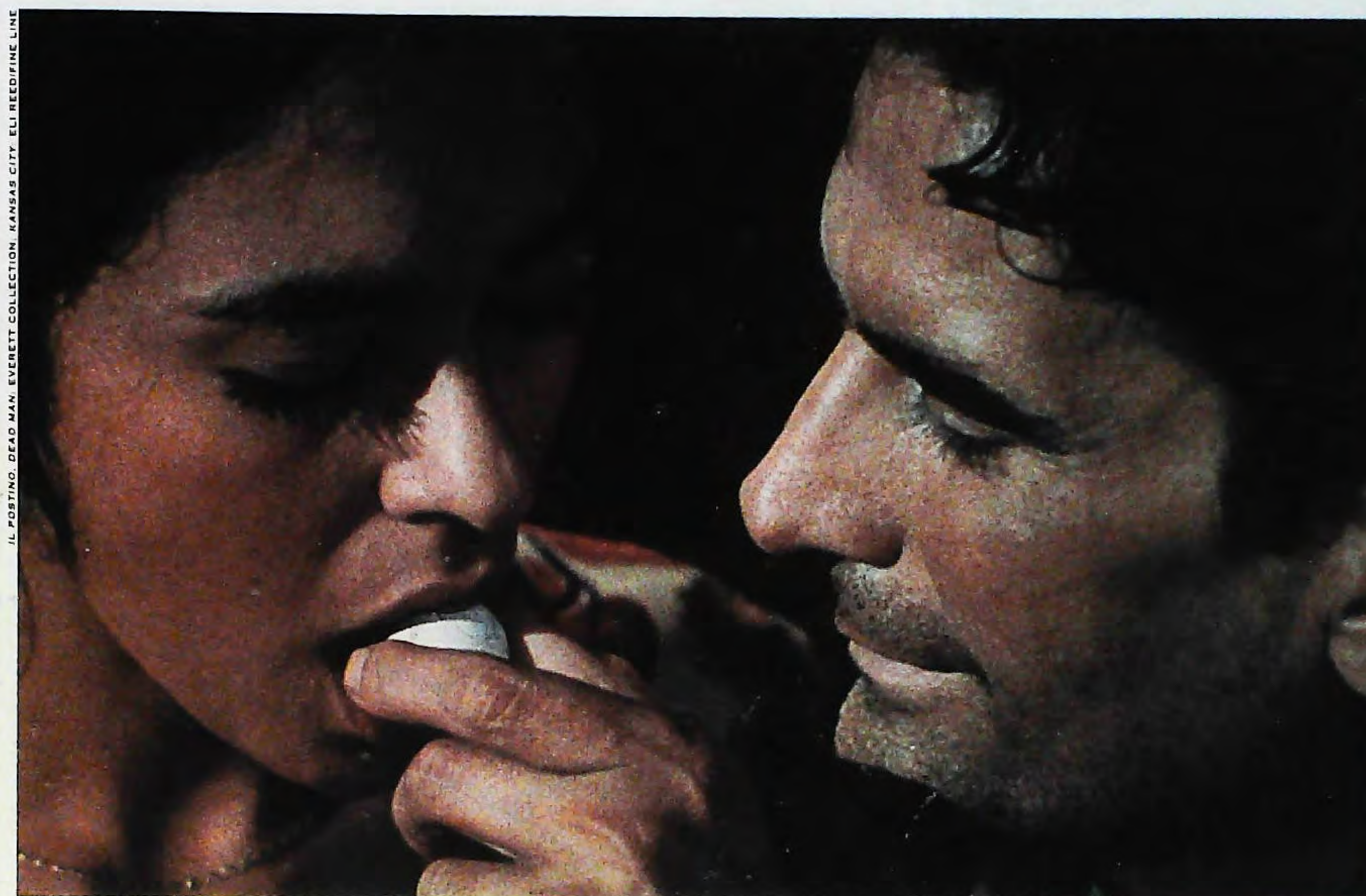
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Where the Art Is

Forget popcorn and soda. Break out the biscotti and espresso. The new-to-video 'Il Postino,' 'Kansas City,' and 'Dead Man' have left the art house for your house. **BY TY BURR**

IF IT sometimes seems as though the options available at the multiplex consist of one chunk of bland Hollywood tofu after another, take heart. It wasn't that long ago that the local movie-house choices were the *only* choices if you lived outside a major urban center. While you once had to travel to New York City or Los Angeles to see the latest Truffaut or Cassavetes (or at least wait for the local college film society to get wise), much of the art-house universe is available for overnight rental on video.

This matters for work that theatrical distributors deem too dicey for broad release. Even a bona fide hit such as **IL POSTINO** (1995, Miramax, PG, subtitled, priced for rental), nominated for a Best Picture Oscar and delayed from video



INDEPENDENTS' WAY: From top, *Postino*'s Troisi, Cucinotta; *City*'s Leigh; *Man*'s Depp

until Miramax could claim that it was the highest-grossing foreign film ever theatrically released in this country, stands to reach a far greater audience on tape. And for a demanding narrative like Robert Altman's **KANSAS CITY** (1996, New Line, R, priced for rental), or a downright uncommercial opus like Jim Jarmusch's **DEAD MAN** (1996, Miramax, R, priced for rental)—both, like *Il Postino*, hitting stores this week—video has become even more necessary, as a source of production funds and a gateway to viewers. Sometimes it's the only gateway: Jarmusch recently blasted Miramax for giving his droll neo-Western a no-profile theatrical release.

Whether viewers at home will accept such atypical visions is another matter. Certainly, *Il Postino* stands to please

renters who normally avoid subtitled films, and the tragic circumstances surrounding the movie—its star, the beloved Italian comedian Massimo Troisi, died of heart failure just hours after the film wrapped—add a human component to attract the curious or sentimental. But *Il Postino* is still a foreign film, moving at the languid, observant pace that may cause itchy Stateside audiences to reach for the fast-forward button.

If you can slow down your movie metabolism, though, you'll be treated to a sweet little tale that stays just this side of preciousness. *Il Postino*, directed by England's Michael Radford, follows a shy small-town postman (Troisi) as he gloms on to a local celebrity—the exiled Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (Philippe Noiret)—and in the process uncovers a lyrical gift that allows him to woo a lollapalooza barmaid (Maria Grazia Cucinotta). The

A ROBERT DE NIRO QUIZ

YOU TALKIN' TO HIM?

OSCAR-WINNING ROBERT DE NIRO: exciting, charismatic, but *versatile*? Judging from almost 30 years' worth of his movies, this great American actor, who stars as a psycho baseball groupie in *The Fan* (see review on page 68), has a slightly limited repertoire. If you can match the movies with the roles below, you'll probably agree. —Jake Tapper

MOVIE	ROLE
1. BLOODY MAMA (1970)	A. Goateed gangster
2. MEAN STREETS (1973)	B. Jewish gangster
3. THE GODFATHER, PART II (1974)	C. Repentant Jesuit gangster
4. TAXI DRIVER (1976)	D. Psycho arsonist
5. THE DEER HUNTER (1978)	E. Psycho stepdad
6. RAGING BULL (1980)	F. Reluctant gangster
7. TRUE CONFESSIONS (1981)	G. Tattooed psycho
8. THE KING OF COMEDY (1983)	H. Irish psycho gangster
9. ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (1984)	I. Cutesy gangster
10. THE MISSION (1986)	J. The father of all gangsters (real)
11. THE UNTOUCHABLES (1987)	K. Satanic psycho gangster
12. ANGEL HEART (1987)	L. Repentant gangster cop
13. WE'RE NO ANGELS (1989)	M. Loudly attired gangster
14. GOODFELLAS (1990)	N. Backwoods gangster
15. BACKDRAFT (1991)	O. Psycho messenger
16. CAPE FEAR (1991)	P. Psycho boxer
17. NIGHT AND THE CITY (1992)	Q. Psycho Nam vet
18. THIS BOY'S LIFE (1993)	R. Patchwork psycho
19. MARY SHELLY'S FRANKENSTEIN (1994)	S. Hinckley-inspired psycho
20. CASINO (1995)	T. The father of all gangsters (fictional)
21. HEAT (1995)	U. Flailing gangster

ANSWERS: 1-N, 2-U, 3-T, 4-S, 5-Q, 6-P, 7-L, 8-O, 9-B, 10-C, 11-K, 12-J, 13-I, 14-H, 15-D, 16-G, 17-F, 18-E, 19-R, 20-M, 21-A

scenery is a vacation for the eyes, the poetry tantalizes the ears, and the only discordant note is a downbeat ending that simply feels wrong—it's as though the filmmakers felt they had to uphold some European bum-out standard.

At least the downer that smacks you in the face at the end of *Kansas City* feels of a piece with the rest of the film. Throughout his long career, Robert Altman has created celluloid mosaics in which galleries of characters converge and implode. The approach can work brilliantly (*Nashville*) or not at all (*Ready to Wear*). *Kansas City* falls in the middle of the pack; as such, it's worth seeing.

Set in the title town during the wide-open 1930s, the film has as its backdrop the round-the-clock jazz scene that was then birthing talents like Count Basie and Lester Young (played by contemporary young musicians in the film). Unfortunately, that backdrop is more interesting than the story out in front, in which a Jean Harlow wannabe (Jennifer Jason Leigh) kidnaps a rich man's wife (Miranda Richardson) in an effort to spring her lowlife boyfriend (Dermot Mulroney) from the clutches of a black gangster (Harry Belafonte).

So the mosaic doesn't cohere—but Belafonte and Richardson put up a good fight, and the percolating soundtrack sounds rich even through TV speakers. "Listen to that music," Belafonte says to Mulroney at one point. "That's Bill Basie. It's part of the reason you're not dead yet." The same can be said for the movie.

Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* has an even flatter pulse—but then, that's the way this neo-Beat New Yorker likes it. A six-gun saga filtered through a chilly bohemian lens, *Dead Man* is shot in spectral black and white and features big-name stars like Johnny Depp, Gabriel Byrne, and Robert Mitchum, as well as a growling rock score by Neil Young. But the charms of lower-budget Jarmusch films such as *Stranger Than Paradise* and *Night on Earth*—lovingly deadpan comedies in which hip losers slouch toward entropy—are replaced here by a studied listlessness.

Depp plays a bespectacled accountant from Ohio whom the whims of fate transform into a murderous Western outlaw. His affectless, zonked-out calm starts out as a joke; ultimately, it's meant to look

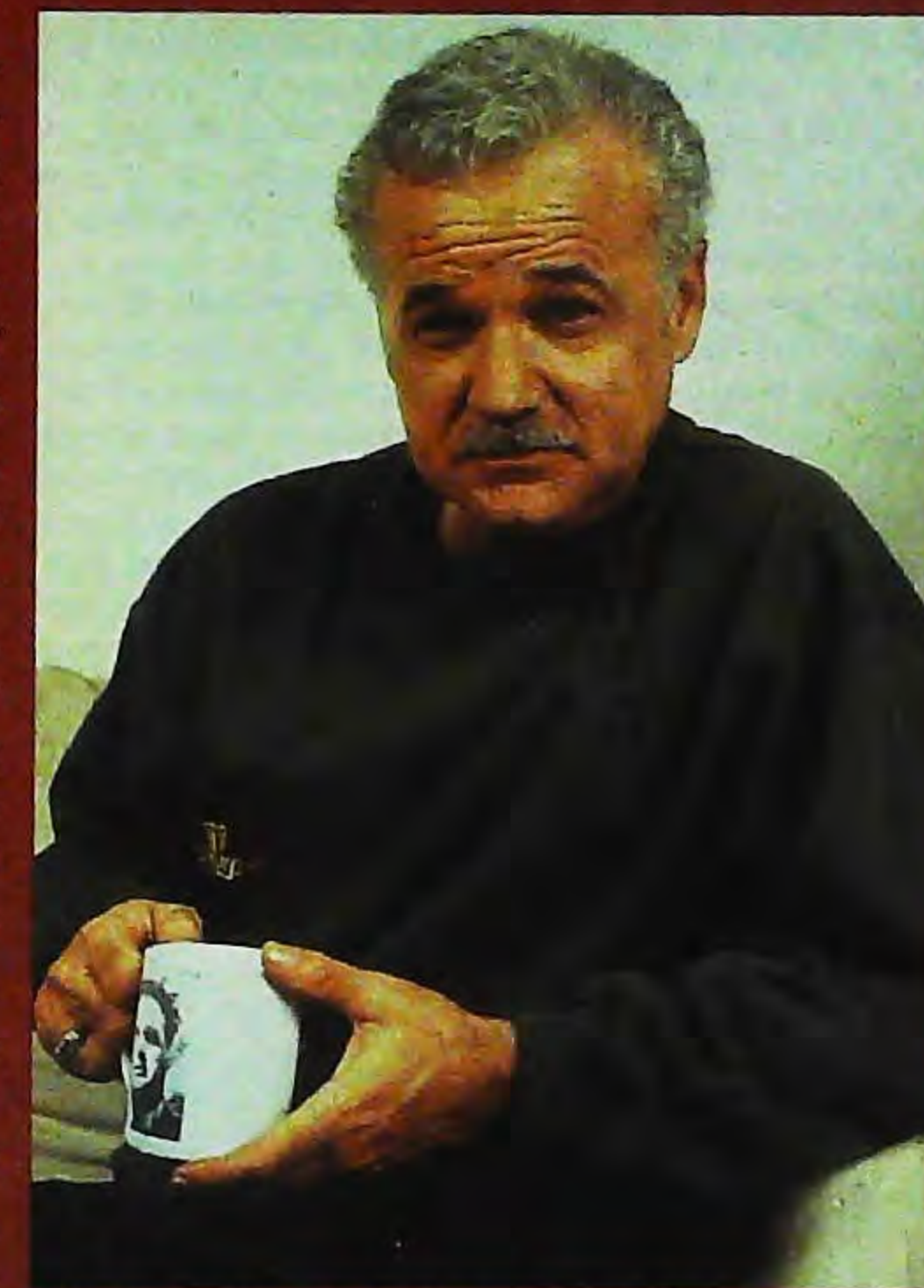
LEGACY
LYNCHIAN TO THE END

AS THE star of *Eraserhead*, the nightmarish 1978 midnight-movie debut of director David Lynch, Jack Nance achieved instant cult fame. In fact, the actor's entire life had a Lynchian quality, up to and including his death Dec. 30, at age 53, from reported injuries sustained in a possible altercation in a South Pasadena donut shop (police are treating the case as a possible homicide). "Sometimes people irritated Jack, so he'd be verbally abusive," Lynch recalled a week following Nance's death. "Jack always said he wouldn't be too hard to kill."

Born in Dallas, Nance had been pursuing an acting career since the '60s with little success until Lynch picked him to play the mega-coiffed hero of the aggressively surreal *Eraserhead*. As Henry Spencer, a shlub who lives in a hellish industrial wasteland, Nance fathers a half-human baby, dines on squirming man-made chicken, and woos a singing angel living under his radiator—all the while maintaining a sweetly blank-faced angst. Lynch later used the actor in nearly all his films except *The Elephant Man*: Nance stumbled upon Laura Palmer's body in TV's *Twin Peaks* and plays a mechanic in the upcoming *Lost Highway*.

For other directors, Nance was bizarre window dressing in art-house fare (*Barfly*), horror films (*Ghoulies*), and straight-to-video dreck (*Meatballs 4*). Off screen, he led a quietly eccentric life—Lynch once described the actor as "con-

tent to stay at home, not even watching television, thinking in his chair, wearing his little slippers"—that turned tragic in 1991, when his wife of six months, Kelly Van Dyke (daughter of *Coach*'s Jerry Van Dyke and costar of a porn movie), hanged herself. *Eraserhead* assures Nance a place in underground movie history, even as those who knew him mourn a self-effacing character who could have wandered in from an Ed Wood set. "I'll miss his dry absurdist humor," Lynch said of his friend. "I'll miss all the characters he would have played." Here's hoping Henry's angel was right, and that "in heaven, everything is fine." —TB



MUG SHOT: Nance holds an *Eraserhead* cup in 1991

like grace. But if *Dead Man* comes close to finding the tone of Zen Americana it's seeking, the rhythm falters a little too often. On one hand, Jarmusch is too much the SoHo ironist to truly commit to genre; on the other, his debunking of Western myths is saddled with as much closet-hippie romanticism as, say, Neil Young.

Still, there are beautiful, liquid mo-

ments here—and the sight of Iggy Pop playing a transvestite pioneer (or is that a pioneer transvestite?) is one I won't soon forget. So maybe Jarmusch was right to grouse. He made the film he wanted, and any way, shape, or distribution channel that gets people to see it is worth the noise. *Il Postino*: **B** *Kansas City*: **C** *Dead Man*: **B-**

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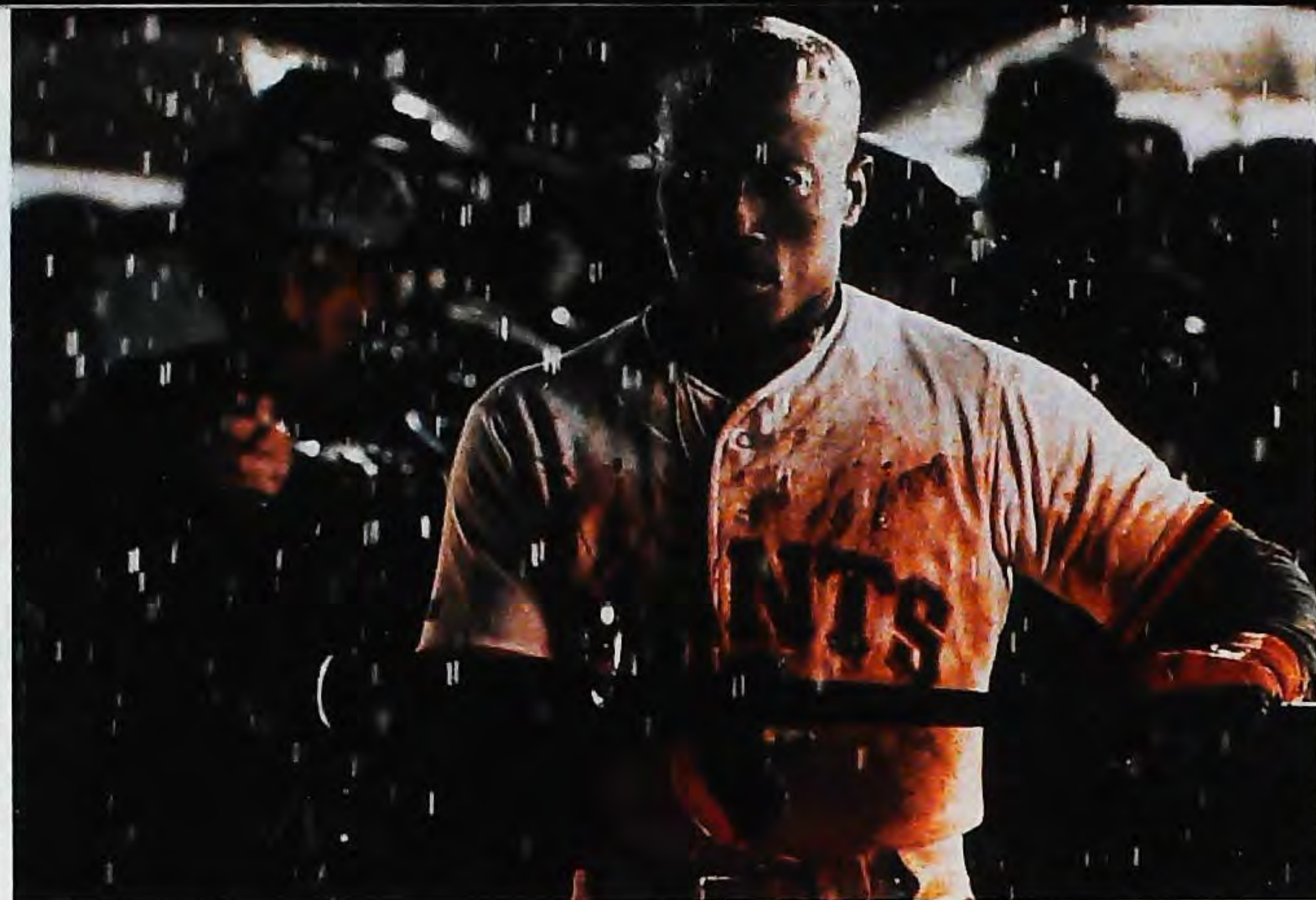
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THE WEEK

RECENT MOVIES

THE FAN Robert De Niro, Wesley Snipes (1996, Columbia TriStar, R, priced for rental) You may have skipped this thriller in theaters because you read the mostly negative reviews. Still, perverse curiosity is tempting you to take the smaller financial risk of renting it on video. After all, how bad could a De Niro movie be? The answer: not much worse. The actor gets off to a brilliant start as an increasingly unstable baseball fan who stalks his favorite superstar (Snipes). But, like Tony Scott's direction, the performance is ultimately all superficial flash, full of old tricks that have worked better for other roles. De Niro finally swings for the fences in a ridiculously rain-soaked stadium finale that finds him stabbing and slashing various ballplayers, before getting blown away by a small army of cops. Oops, did I spoil the ending? Not really. It was rotten before I got there. **D** —Michael Sauter

D3 THE MIGHTY DUCKS Emilio Estevez, David Selby (1996, Walt Disney, PG, \$22.99) The Mighty Ducks go to high school! And true to their underdog tradition, they land (en masse) in a stuffy preppy academy, where they stick out like white pucks. Not to worry. The teammates survive by playing supposed-



BATTERED BATTER: As a player stalked by a crazed *Fan*, Snipes weathers more than just a rain delay

ly harmless pranks—like loosing the dean's fire-ant farm into the upperclassmen's dorm—on their way to the inevitable grand finale against the varsity team. Buried somewhere, there's a potentially useful message about growing up and getting along. But that theme is so sugarcoated by the feel-good formula that it ends up mere brain candy. Not that most kids will mind. Still, even the most nondiscerning *Ducks* fan may be starting to notice that this series, like the no-longer small-fry stars, is getting too old to be cute anymore. **C-** —MS

THE TRIGGER EFFECT Kyle MacLachlan, Elisabeth Shue (1996, MCA/Universal, R, priced for rental) This first directorial effort from screenwriter David Koepp (*Mission: Impossible*, *Jurassic Park*) is a laughable fable about how rudeness really hurts. MacLachlan and Shue play an on-the-edge couple whose sense of ennui gets worse when a mysterious electrical blackout envelops their

city. Further sparking their disconnection is a romantic rival (Dermot Mulroney), suburban white-flight hysteria, and a mistrust of others that results in tragedy and a circle-the-wagons mentality. With an overly pedantic tone and humdrum acting, *The Trigger Effect* may be an earnest *Twilight Zone*-style allegory, but on video it's simply white noise. **C-** —Joe Neumaier

DAY OF THE WARRIOR Julie Strain, Marcus Bagwell (1996, Monarch, R, priced for rental) It's unfair to compare the movies of Andy Sidaris with those of other directors. After all, the competition has to waste time maintaining a coherent plot and getting performances from talented actors. Sidaris just calls up a few ladies from the pages of *Penthouse* or *Playboy* and sends them off to play secret agent in front of the cameras. His latest direct-to-video exercise is another men's magazine come to life, full of sili-

cons. As for the story, a turncoat (Ted Prior) compromises the bimboes and beefcake as they infiltrate a criminal mastermind's strip joints and porn studios. As for the dialogue, just remember that two get-this-off-my-chest jokes is lame, but three is a motif. **B-** —J.R. Taylor

SCI-FIGHTERS Roddy Piper, Billy Drago (1996, Triboro, R, priced for rental) **MARKED MAN** Piper, Miles O'Keefe (1996, LIVE, R, priced for rental) Pro wrestler "Rowdy" Roddy Piper may not have much acting range, but he sure can run the gamut of straight-to-tape action stereotypes. Indeed, with his latest, typically generic adventures, he stretches all the way from hunter to hunted. In *Sci-Fighters*, he's a futuristic cop chasing a serial rapist who has escaped from a moon-based prison to spread an icky alien virus all over Boston. In *Marked Man*, he's a framed-for-murder con who breaks out of jail to clear his name. Derivative as these vehicles

DOUBLE TAKE OF THE WEEK

War of the Words

Tim Burton's zany alien-invasion comedy *Mars Attacks!* may not be a hit on the big screen, but don't be fooled if you think you see it on store shelves. That's where you'll find GoodTimes' similar-looking rerelease of 1938's *Mars Attacks the World*, a feature-length version of the serial *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars*.



are—*Sci-Fighters* is a blatant *Alien* *Blade Runner* rip-off, *Marked Man* is a very poor man's *The Fugitive*—both muck up can't-miss formulas, adding convoluted twists to their simplistic story lines. Yet Piper stays on course, steadfastly slugging away. That doesn't actually improve these movies, but it does keep them moving. Both: **C-** —MS

FOREIGN

MAYBE...MAYBE NOT Til Schweiger, Joachim Krol (1994, LIVE, R, subtitled, priced for rental) Anyone who thought *The Birdcage* was de-meaningly retro should take a look at this German import, which inexplicably became Germany's highest-grossing homegrown film ever. The story, about a young hunk (Schweiger) who moves in with a gay man (Krol) after breaking up with his girlfriend (Katja Riemann), initially promises to be a smart farce about sexual politics and identity. But most of the characters are stereotypes, and the humor (butt and penis jokes abound) comes across as neither astute nor witty. When Schweiger removes his clothes for the most contrived reasons, the film reveals its true purpose—mindless titillation. **C-** —Tim Purtell

LASERDISC

THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW Edward G. Robinson, Joan Bennett (1944, MGM/UA, B&W, unrated, \$39.98) It's a crime that this Fritz Lang melodrama, starring Robinson as a Milquetoast psychology prof caught up in murder, has taken so long to make its way to laserdisc. The best scenes are so loaded with expressionist iconography that they beg for instant replays (which only laser provides without rewind waits). Mirrors are everywhere, providing multiple physical and moral perspectives, and a tense, nighttime dump-the-body sequence twists audience empathy as deftly as Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Look out for a set of extratextual clues: Bits of the film apparently snipped to satisfy censors have been reinstated, but they're clearly detectable by their flickering quality. **A** —Steve Daly

COMING UP

Due in stores the week of Jan. 30–Feb. 5:

CASSETTES

- ◆ **JACK** (1996, Hollywood, PG-13) A sheltered boy with the body of a 40-year-old (Robin Williams) tackles fifth grade.
- ◆ **BOGUS** (1996, Warner, PG) An orphan (Halley Joel Osment) and his imaginary pal (Gérard Depardieu) move in with his mother's childhood friend (Whoopi Goldberg).
- ◆ **BAMBI** (1942, Walt Disney, G) Restored 55th-anniversary rerelease of the animated classic about a deer and his playmates; available for a limited time only.

LASERDISC

- ◆ **THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE** (1962, MGM/UA, PG-13) Digitally remastered collector's edition of John Frankenheimer's thriller includes an interview with Frank Sinatra.

TOP VIDEOS

GREASED LIGHTNING

JOHN TRAVOLTA appears to have been touched by an angel—*White Man's Burden* notwithstanding. He follows *Get Shorty* and *Broken Arrow* with yet another video winner, portraying *Phenomenon*'s Everyman struck with extraordinary mental powers. The supernatural drama (which earned \$105 million in theaters so far) shoots to the top rentals position its first week, just as the actor achieves otherworldly success as an archangel in the big-screen *Michael*. Back on earth, he'll soon sit in the Oval Office in the hotly anticipated *Primary Colors*. If only Travolta could send some of his good fortune Tom Arnold's way: *The Stupids* debuts only one spot higher (at No. 38) than *Car-pool*, another '96 Arnold vehicle, did last week.



LAST WEEK TOP 10 TAPE RENTALS

LAST WEEK	TOP 10 TAPE RENTALS	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1 PHENOMENON John Travolta, Touchstone	1
2	2 A TIME TO KILL Matthew McConaughey, Warner	3
3	1 THE ROCK Sean Connery, Hollywood	6
4	3 TIN CUP Kevin Costner, Warner	5
5	6 KINGPIN Woody Harrelson, MGM/UA	2
6	4 THE NUTTY PROFESSOR Eddie Murphy, MCA/Universal	10
7	5 CHAIN REACTION Keanu Reeves, FoxVideo	5
8	13 FLED Laurence Fishburne, MGM/UA	2
9	7 MATILDA Mara Wilson, Columbia TriStar	5
10	8 INDEPENDENCE DAY Bill Pullman, FoxVideo	9

TAPE SALES

1	1 MATILDA Mara Wilson, Columbia TriStar, \$24.95	5
2	4 THE NUTTY PROFESSOR Eddie Murphy, MCA/Universal, \$22.98	10
3	2 INDEPENDENCE DAY Bill Pullman, FoxVideo, \$22.98	9
4	3 TOY STORY Animated, Walt Disney, \$26.99	12
5	7 RIVERDANCE Various Artists, Columbia TriStar, \$24.95	8
6	5 THE LAND BEFORE TIME IV Animated, MCA/Universal, \$19.98	6
7	9 BRAVEHEART Mel Gibson, Paramount, \$24.95	21
8	6 MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE Tom Cruise, Paramount, \$22.95	10
9	8 TOP GUN Tom Cruise, Paramount, \$14.95	117
10	10 TWISTER Helen Hunt, Warner, \$22.96	16

2 WKS. AGO KID VIDEO SALES

1	1 OLIVER & COMPANY Animated, Walt Disney, \$26.99	15
2	2 MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: HOTEL WHO-DONE-IT Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, Dualstar, \$12.95	11
3	3 WALLACE AND GROMIT: A CLOSE SHAVE Animated, BBC/FoxVideo, \$9.98	11
4	15 THE LAND BEFORE TIME IV Animated, MCA/Universal, \$19.98	5
5	4 SKY DANCERS: PINK VOLUME Animated, Cabin Fever, \$14.98	9
6	6 SKY DANCERS: BLUE VOLUME Animated, Cabin Fever, \$14.98	7
7	7 SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK: AMERICA ROCK Animated, ABC Video/Paramount, \$12.95	57
8	10 THE ARISTOCATS Animated, Walt Disney, \$26.99	39
9	5 MARY-KATE & ASHLEY'S HAWAIIAN BEACH PARTY Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, Dualstar, \$12.95	11
10	16 WALLACE AND GROMIT: A GRAND DAY OUT Animated, BBC/FoxVideo, \$9.98	47

SOURCE: VIDEO BUSINESS FOR THE WEEK ENDING JAN. 19, 1997
KID VIDEO DATA: BILLBOARD FROM THE ISSUE DATED JAN. 25, 1997

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ENCORE

Was 'Poltergeist' Cursed?

BY TY BURR

Young Heather
O'Rourke's
1988 death cast
a pall over the
hit horror film

THE IMAGE THAT endures is of a platinum-blond picture of innocence silhouetted against a picture tube of pure evil. "They're heeere!" called out 5-year-old Heather O'Rourke as *Poltergeist*'s Carol Anne Freeling, in an angelic warning about her family's haunted house. The hit 1982 horror drama launched the career of a remarkably composed young talent—and so it seemed particularly cruel when, just six years later, on Feb. 1, 1988, the 12-year-old actress died during intestinal surgery, fueling rumors among superstitious filmgoers of a "Poltergeist curse."

"She was a born actor," says JoBeth Williams, who played Carol Anne's mother in the Tobe Hooper-directed film. "I had a scene where I'm screaming and crying, and Heather started to cry—really sob. After the scene was over, I told Heather that it was only pretend, and she turned to me and said, 'I know that.'"

Such preternatural aplomb had helped O'Rourke get cast in the first place. She had been visiting MGM with her parents when Steven Spielberg, *Poltergeist*'s cowriter and producer, asked if he could speak with her. Heather replied that she did not talk to strangers. Spielberg persevered, and O'Rourke soon was playing a poker-faced little girl who gets abducted by otherworldly spirits.

She loved it. And though she later worked on TV (notably as the daughter of Henry Winkler's girlfriend on *Happy Days*), Heather and Carol Anne were an integral part of the *Poltergeist* franchise.

Prior to the filming of *Poltergeist III*, doctors had diagnosed her with Crohn's disease, a chronic intestinal inflammation. In fact, she was suffering from a bowel obstruction that could have been remedied. (Her mother later filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against Heather's healthcare provider and won an undisclosed sum in damages.) On Jan. 31, 1988, Heather woke up vomiting; the next morning, she collapsed. By the time she was helicoptered to a chil-



EVERETT COLLECTION

dren's hospital in San Diego, O'Rourke had suffered a cardiac arrest—and though doctors corrected the blockage, she died of septic shock shortly thereafter.

To some, she was the latest casualty of a dark hex. Dominique Dunne, from the first film, was strangled by her boyfriend in 1982, and Julian Beck, the grim preacher in *Poltergeist II*, died of cancer shortly after filming. To surviving cast members, such talk belittles the memory of their coworkers; no one contacted for this article would even discuss the "curse."

Certainly, the rumor has helped to obscure a real talent. That Heather O'Rourke was such a trouper may, in fact, have kept the adults around her in the dark. "I spoke to her mother after she died," remembers Williams, "and she said that this was a child who never complained. And she wondered if that might have contributed to her death." ♦

TIME CAPSULE

Feb. 1, 1988

Moviegoers spent a good evening with *Good Morning, Vietnam*; on TV, *The Cosby Show*'s clan was tops; Donald Trump's *Trump: The Art of the Deal* made big bucks in bookstores; and Tiffany had a radio gem in "Could've Been."



SPIRITED AWAY: Several cast members—including O'Rourke (top) and Dunne (above)—met untimely deaths

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